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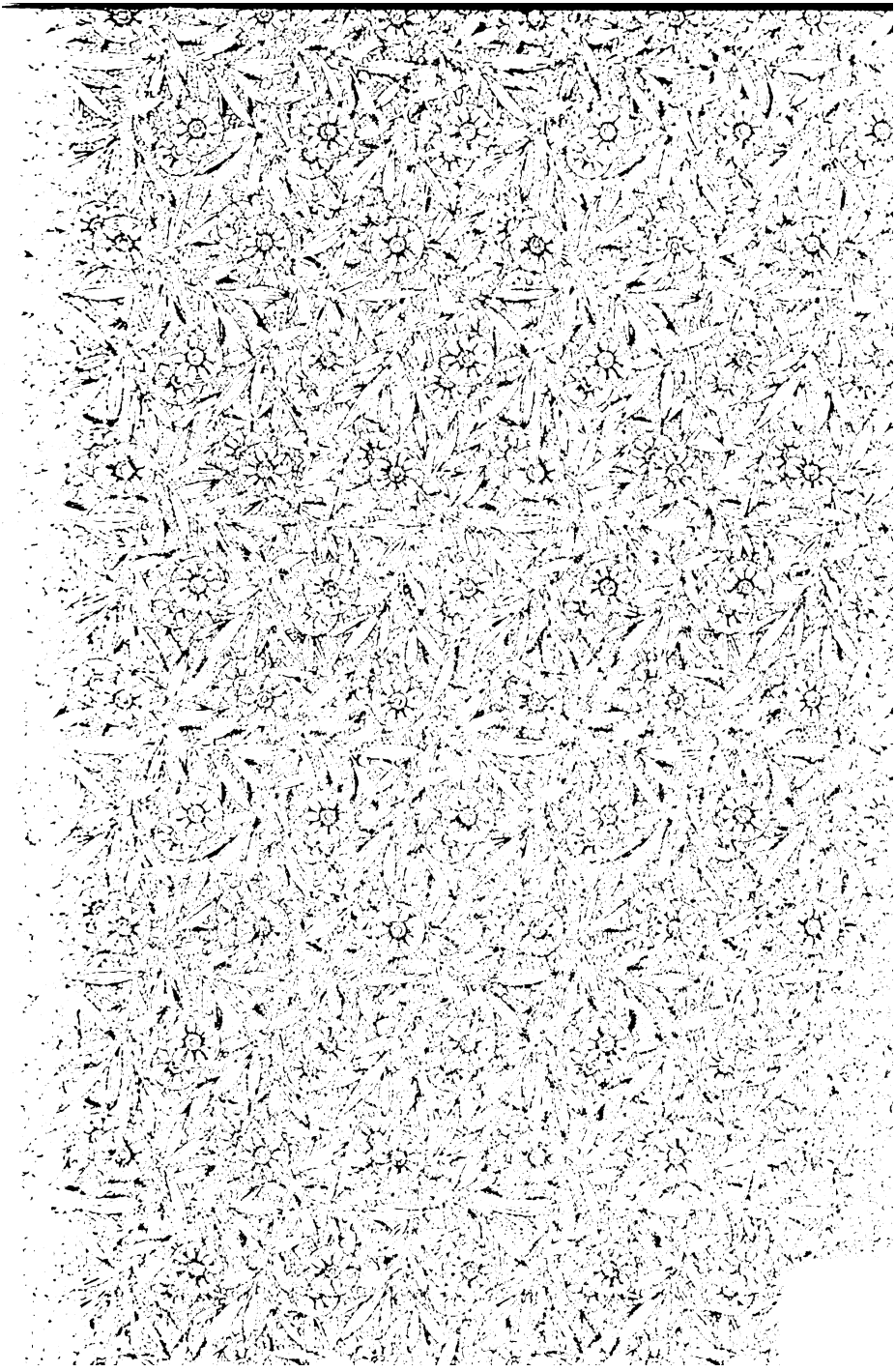
TREHERNE'S TEMPTATION



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TREHERNE'S TEMPTATION.

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TREHERNE'S TEMPTATION.

BY

ALARIC CARR.

"What else remains for me? Youth, hope, and love:
To build a new life on a ruined life,
To make the future fairer than the past,
And make the past appear a troubled dream."

Masque of Pandora.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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TREHERNE'S TEMPTATION.

CHAPTER I.

He will awake no more, oh! never more!
* * * * *
Stay yet awhile! speak to me once again:
Kiss me, so long but as a kiss may live.

SHELLEY.

SEVERAL weeks pass—autumn chill, sad, many-tinted, stands before the door; along the slopes, grapes hang in purple clusters from the vines; in the woods the oaks and elms make brown patches between the dark, unchanging pines; the long summer is over and with it the Baden season; the evenings grow chilly with a foretaste of coming winter and the band, when, weather permitting, it still plays on the Promenade, has for chief audience rows of empty chairs.

Reine can no longer lie dreaming in the forest shades, but she delights to roam with the

dogs, through the rustling dead leaves, which a night or two of early frost have sent shivering in shoals from the trees, and she finds the bracing, pungent air exhilarating after the intense summer heat.

It is still warm enough however in the middle of the day to sit in the garden, and in the afternoon, Reine, from her favourite seat under the catalpa tree, generally espies De Ferrières' equipage, tearing along the *Lichtenthaler Allée,* guided by the hand of that accomplished Jehu; with "Smeet," the english groom, whom long practice has made perfect, in the art of maintaining his equilibrium—looking as if he were screwed immovably into the seat behind.

At the bridge the horses are reined abruptly on to their haunches; "Smeet" unscrews himself and runs to their heads, while De Ferrières descends to invite Reine or her father to accompany him in his drive; truth to tell, it is an entertainment Challoner does not appreciate; he has all an Englishman's instinctive love for and knowledge of horses, and it affords him no pleasure to sit at the Vicomte's side, while he unconsciously maltreats his patient steeds, in the

firm conviction, which it would be death to their friendship to disturb, that he is a most brilliant, experienced, and judicious whip; as a rule, therefore, Challoner basely beats a retreat before De Ferrières' advent, leaving Reine to bear the brunt of the battle alone.

De Ferrières' prognostications concerning von Waldeck have not been realized; he has been as constant a visitor as ever at the châlet, and the severe musical studies have flourished uninterruptedly, until at duty's call he betook himself to the autumn manœuvres; but whether being unusually modest, he is doubtful of success, or whether since De Ferrières' warning, there has been a constraint in Reine's manner which his hyper-sensitive nature is quick to perceive, certain it is, that he is no nearer the attainment of his heart's desire than he was two months ago.

Max indeed possesses a brain of so far original construction, that it can entertain the idea that any and every woman may not be longing, in vulgar parlance, to "jump at him" upon the slightest provocation; he has determined that his ultimate chance of success shall not be endangered by any undue precipitation; so he has gone off to his mimic warfare, thinking

of Reine as he bawls and yells in the din and turmoil of a miniature, imaginary Sedan, or as "he lies like a warrior taking his rest," camping out, cold, damp and uncomfortable, under the starlit heavens.

Treherne has fulfilled his worst threats; has sent a few lines of farewell to Challoner, and sailed for South America with his friend Heriot; this last step is the death-blow to Reine's hopes; that curt matter-of-fact letter, without one line for her, seems to have severed the last link between them.

"What crotchet has the boy got in his head?" asks Challoner on receipt of this epistle, looking with perplexity in his face, at Reine; "he will be back in six months, *chérie*, heartily sick of it all."

But Reine has fled in search of solitude, for at that moment, even to her father she cannot trust herself to speak of Jasper; to her it seems that he will never come back—as if in all the dreary future they must always be something worse than strangers to each other.

But this sorrow presently sinks into comparative insignificance, in the presence of another blow which falls upon poor little Reine, already

overburthened—a blow more crushing than it has ever entered into her heart to conceive.

One afternoon she is at the piano, practising diligently the Waldstein Sonata, for von Waldeck's execution of this masterpiece has roused her spirit of emulation, and she has determined to master its difficulties before his return; she is deep in its intricacies, when De Ferrières comes hastily through the garden and makes for the kitchen window where Therèse stands, fat and good-tempered, thriftily knitting a sock of hideous shade and texture, destined for the adornment of little "Chules'" sturdy leg; Jules, *en déshabille*, sitting on the table, is immersed in the *Figaro;* he looks up, surprised, as the Vicomte appears, and is in the act of apologizing for the deficiencies of his *toilette*, when something in De Ferrières' face arrests his volubility.

"Chut!" says the Vicomte in a low voice, pointing to the *salon*, laying his hand on Jules' arm, and adds a few hurried words, at which the rubicund face of Therèse grows white as death and Jules sits staring as if some one had dealt him a stunning blow, and then breaks out into forcible expressions of incredulity.

"But Monsieur le Vicomte, it cannot be—not an hour ago——"

"Jules, my friend—it *is;* I have seen it, I who tell you; for the sake of Mademoiselle, control yourself."

"It will kill her! *Grand Dieu!*" cries Jules, throwing up his hands in despair; "*pauvre chère petite!*" and Therèse breaks out into sobs and little Jules cries sympathetically, though he cannot comprehend the why and wherefore of his parent's sudden distress.

"I must tell Mademoiselle; I must break it to her now at once," says De Ferrières.

"Heaven be praised that Monsieur is here to do it," returns Jules devoutly.

Reine is engaged in fierce combat with her refractory fingers over a complicated passage; she returns again and again to the attack, while the Vicomte pauses beside the open window, grown chicken-hearted as he thinks of the task before him; the girl sits with her back to him; amidst the thunders of the "Waldstein" his approach is unheard; the little room looks so peaceful with her books, music and womanly possessions scattered here and there; a bunch of scarlet pomegranates stands at her side on the piano;—

outside, the sky is blue, the sun is shining, the garden is yet bright with showy autumn flowers, the pretty balcony, where they have passed such happy hours, is a glowing mass of crimson creeper—to De Ferrières that little scene has always seemed the perfection of peaceful happiness—his heart fails him as he crosses the threshold, knowing that he is taking desolation with him.

As he steps into the room Reine turns, rises and meets him with the smile of genial welcome she always has for him; the *persiennes* are half closed, the room is in shadow, and his back to the light, so that as they shake hands she only sees his face indistinctly.

"Mademoiselle Reine," he says very gravely, "I have brought you some bad news."

"Yes?" then suddenly struck by his manner, looking at him with intense anxiety, "Oh! Vicomte — tell me quickly — has anything happened to *père?*"

She stands parted-lipped, breathless, with clasped hands, waiting for his answer.

"Something has happened to your father—yes," he returns in a voice which sounds strange to his own ears; the words seem cruel to him

in their cold, bare simplicity, yet he can find no others.

"Let me go to him quickly, not a moment must be lost," she cries in her excitement, preparing to run bare-headed into the road.

He lays a detaining hand upon her arm and says fervently, "*Chère* Mademoiselle — little friend—do not go—you can do no good by going; believe me."

His accent, his face, tell her more than his mere words; she raises two imploring eyes full of dread to his, the remembrance of which haunt him for many a day.

"Tell me the truth—the worst—I can bear anything better than suspense."

"*Chère petite*, I have only the worst to tell," replies De Ferrières with infinite gentleness, and he takes the forlorn child's little cold hands in his, looking, as indeed he feels, unutterably helpless and wretched.

"Do you mean to tell me *père* is dead?" And poor De Ferrières can only bow his head in silence.

"God help me!" she cries, and falls heavily into a chair, while her face grows deathlike in its pallor; but she has not fainted and she is quite

tearless; she is not one of those fortunate women, to whom, in the presence of calamity, nature grants the boon of temporary unconsciousness and subsequently, inexhaustible tears; her feelings lie deeper, and find little relief in outward physical signs.

"It cannot be!" she says, starting up in a few moments; "oh! it cannot be! not an hour ago he kissed me—said good-bye—not for the last time; how could it be? Do you think I should not have known? Ill he may be—let us call Jules and go—but——" she shudders and cannot speak the dreadful word.

"You have been very brave lately—you have suffered—I know it very well—much in silence—be brave now, little friend."

"If *this* is true—*that* was not suffering—nothing"—she says stonily, dry-eyed; how he wishes she would cry and scream like other women!

"You will take me to him, will you not?" she continues, laying a pleading hand upon his arm, "when *père* is ill he likes no one with him but me—ah! Vicomte, are we both dreaming, and will he come presently over the bridge, whistling—he is always so happy—so gay—and calling *chérie, chérie,* but where art thou then?"

Another minute of that pitiful, wistful pleading and De Ferrières feels that tears must inevitably disgrace his manly cheeks.

"My dear little friend," he says with an effort, most solemnly; "your father will never call for his *chérie* again until she goes to be with him for ever."

She comprehends fully at last; he sees it in the yet more deadly hue which spreads itself over her white, scared face: yet, trying still to find room for doubt, she whispers, "Is it true?"

"Would to God it were not:—we were at the club playing billiards," (the every-day details thrust themselves so oddly between the pages of the terrible story,) "suddenly, without any warning at all, your father, cue in hand, fell forward across the table," continues De Ferrières circumstantially, feeling that nothing but a plain statement of facts will ever bring the calamity home to Reine's numbed faculties; "we lifted him on to a sofa—sent for a doctor—the best—we did all that could be done—it was of no avail—even as he fell, he was dead—he had heart disease, which often exists for years, unsuspected."

"But if *père* is—oh! I cannot say it—I cannot

bear it—anything but that—I cannot live without him!" she moans piteously.

De Ferrières does not contradict her, though he knows much better than she does, through what degrees and depths of pain and misery this frail, mortal frame can struggle.

"Where is Treherne?" he asks gently.

"On the sea—gone—I am all alone now;" and at this remembrance, to De Ferrières' intense relief, she bursts into a paroxysm of tears, while he vaguely wonders that he should live to see the day, when he is glad a pretty woman should weep—tears not shed for him.

In the falling twilight they carry Challoner home to his little heart-broken daughter; for the first time his presence brings gloom and sadness with it, or rather they come in the train of grim, pitiless death, and have nothing in common with the bright, genial spirit which is gone.

By a stroke of Moltkian strategy conceived and executed by De Ferrières, he is laid noiselessly in his room, before Reine, prostrate with grief, knows that he is near; there, the Vicomte leads her presently and leaves her alone with the father she has loved so devotedly, whose

beautiful face, in its awful calmness, seems so utterly strange to her.

What De Ferrières is to Reine during this terrible time, she only realizes after many weeks are over; his patience, his forethought, his unobtrusive yet untiring devotion, to the child of his lost friend, know indeed no weariness.

He takes counsel with Jules and they decide upon telegraphing to Hinton Challoner to request his immediate presence; the Vicomte is much exercised in mind concerning the possible wish of Reine or other relatives, that Challoner should lie with his ancestors at Girton; in Germany little time is permitted for deliberation in these matters, so that he is constrained, unwillingly, to broach the subject to Reine, on the day following her father's death.

He despatches Therèse, whose countenance in these days is a salt Niagara and her whole being one large sob, with a request that she will speak to him for a few minutes; the good woman ascends to that darkened room, which all her entreaties, cannot persuade her young mistress to desert; Jean-Jacques lies across the threshold, with a wise keen brown eye wide open, on the alert, to catch the slightest movement within.

Therèse opens the door softly; Reine kneels as she always finds her, clasping one cold, unresponsive hand in hers; her head pillowed on her father's breast among the oleander and pomegranate blossoms, loving fingers have laid there. "Surely, surely," she has thought in the first agony of this awful réunion, "he will speak to me once again; he will not suffer me to lie here coldly in his arms without one kiss, one word!" But gradually she has learnt the whole sad truth —she knows those lips, smiling with their old sweet, lifelike smile under the golden moustache, will never kiss her—never call his *chérie* any more.

Therèse lays a hand upon her arm; she turns her face—or does it belong to some one else? At sight of it the woman's tears fall faster than ever, as with her already much bedewed apron, she mops her swollen countenance and mentally runs through the calendar in search of that especial saint, who may best comfort and support her *chère* Mademoiselle in this, her dire distress.

Therèse fulfils her errand, and Reine rises wearily; outside stands little "Chules" frightened, with large awe-struck, wondering eyes; he cannot understand the hushed silence that has fallen

suddenly upon the house, or why "Monsieur" who always had a kind word and smile for him, lies so still in that darkened room, where Mademoiselle watches night and day; she stoops to kiss the child, and Jean-Jacques rubs his head against her knee, licks her hand in mute sympathy, and follows her downstairs, where De Ferrières awaits her.

"Forgive that I sent for you," he says after a few words of greeting; "but in the first place, *chère enfant*, it is not well for you to be so long —where you were—and in the second there is something about which I am compelled very unwillingly to trouble you—tell me, however, first —have you eaten to-day?"

Upon this point the Vicomte is already instructed by Jules, who—like all his class, to whom plenty to eat and drink, represents the acme of prosperity and happiness—imagines that no mortal can fast for more than four hours, without grave risk to his constitution, and has met De Ferrières with lugubrious countenance and the declaration that "Mademoiselle has eaten *rien, absolument rien*;" and has, in his opinion, entered upon a slow but determined course of suicide.

She shakes her head in answer to his question;

with his hand upon the bell, he says, "You permit me?"

"Jules," says De Ferrières, "Mademoiselle would like a cup of coffee and some english toast."

"Directly, M'sieur—and two little eggs on the dish—just newly laid as Mademoiselle loves them—or an omelette—*n'est ce pas*—quite small—so light—like nothing at all," he suggests insinuatingly.

She cannot help smiling the ghost of a smile—eggs—omelettes—eating—is it possible she can ever interest herself again, in such material details?

"That will be for another time," De Ferrières says; "just now, a cup of black coffee, my good Jules;" and the poor fellow retires wringing his hands, turning at the door to convey in expressive gestures, his concern at the change so short a time has wrought in Reine.

"You will drink the coffee I know because it will give me pleasure," says De Ferrières, when Jules quickly reappears.

She swallows it obediently, but with the best will in the world she cannot eat.

"What is it you want to ask me?" she says,

putting away the toast untasted, which Jules, with much tribulation, has succeeded in making, at a fire four inches square.

"A painful question."

"But necessary—since you ask it—now."

It pleases him that she understands him so well; a look not strictly paternal comes for a second into his eyes, but is immediately suppressed.

"It is this—would your father have wished to be—to rest at Girton?"—choose his words as he will, he cannot rob them of their cruel significance—"would you wish it?"

"Oh! no, no; he shall not be taken to that cold, stately place, far away from me, where no one cares for him; let him rest here, under the blue skies, near the forests he loved—promise me, Vicomte."

"Dear Mademoiselle you know I have not the right to decide; it should be I think as you wish: later, possibly you may live in England—at Girton with your friends; then perhaps you would be unhappy if your father's grave were in a strange land."

"I shall never go to Girton—never—*Grand Dieu!* is it not enough already! Let him rest

here—here, where I lost him, oh! *petit père bien aimé!* in the pretty cemetery, where we have so often wandered together; let him lie at the foot of the pine-forest, looking away towards the Vosges shadows, where I long to go to sleep for ever at his side."

"It is well," returns De Ferrières, unsteadily; and adds after a pause, "there is yet another subject—you will forgive me if I distress you—Treherne—should be communicated with at once, I think."

"But he is gone; no letter, no telegram can reach him."

"In these days happily that is almost an impossibility; has he left absolutely no address?"

"Yes, in one letter, his last, I think there was an address."

"Then will you not write by the french mail which leaves Bordeaux in two days?" asks De Ferrières, who has been not a little puzzled by this sudden freak of Treherne's; "I will also send a few lines."

"If you wish it, yes;" answers Reine, with curious indifference, wondering vaguely if it be possible that only a few hours ago Jasper's absence seemed almost an unbearable sorrow.

She goes to the writing-table, where she pauses, pen in hand; her head is so bewildered she cannot collect her thoughts; hastily, without prelude, she writes three words, "*Père* is dead;" three words which to her seem the epitome of all misery past, present and to come; indistinctly, like the remembrance of some long-dreamt dream, Treherne's promise to return should she have need of him, recurs to her, hazily, as it were, out of the remote past, and she adds: "Will you not come back?—REINE."

"Your cousin will be here to-morrow," says De Ferrières, as she hands him her letter; "do you know him well?"

"Slightly only."

"What sort of a man is he?"

"I have only seen him once or twice; he is not exactly old; middle-aged; he seemed to talk a great deal; he is a clergyman—one that in England is called a Ritualist—high church."

"Ah! I know; one of those gentlemen who hanker after the loaves and fishes of their own church while they honour ours by that imitation which is the sincerest flattery? Has he a wife?"

"Oh yes; cousin Claudia."

"She will accompany him, probably."

"I hope not."

"But why? Surely it is only natural that she should come to you in your sorrow."

"She is frigid; an icicle; I would rather be wretched than comforted by her; I could not bear her to speak to me of *père*."

"Have you not other relatives whom you like better?" asks De Ferrières, his heart full of sincerest pity for the desolate little girl.

"None: I never wanted any one but him," she answers, heart-brokenly; and the Vicomte, feeling himself powerless, wisely holds his peace.

"You will try to rest to-night?" he says gently, rising to depart.

"I will rest afterwards; but when—when?" she falters, and her lips refuse to frame the cruel question.

"It must be very soon—here, you know, it cannot be otherwise," he answers, taking her hand between his and speaking with a tender reverence, which contrasts curiously with his habitual, airy manner. "Good-night, *petite amie;* may the good God protect you."

Von Waldeck hurrying that afternoon to Baden, in his eagerness to behold Reine once

more, after his absence of three weeks, learns the fatal news; instead of crossing by the well-known path into the garden and finding the lady of his love seated under the catalpa tree, fair and smiling, with the proud Coquin upon her knee, and Jean-Jacques in humble adoration at her feet, as he has pictured her to himself a thousand times since they parted, he walks round to the street-door, which is opened by Jules, whose doleful visage struggles ineffectually to don a severe expression as he finds himself confronted by the glittering uniform of one of his country's enemies.

The Herr Lieutenant's distress however is evidently so heartfelt and genuine, that Jules' prejudices melt into thin air, in presence of this sympathy in a common sorrow; he answers von Waldeck's questions readily, gives him a succinct account of the catastrophe, and even unbends so far as to promise to convey to his young mistress, the assurance of von Waldeck's profound sorrow at the calamity which has befallen her—and Max retraces his steps saddened and thoughtful, thinking of Reine in her solitary misery, wishing with all his heart that he had dared to tell her how dear she is to him, so that in these evil

days the right to comfort her might have been his.

The next day brings Hinton Challoner—to Reine's great relief—alone.

He is a fine-looking middle-aged man, whose portly figure, substantial, clean-shaven cheeks and ruby-tinted nose, tell tales of a leaning towards the good things of this vain, temporal existence: he is attired in creaseless, sable, glove-fitting garments, which might excite the admiration—even the envy of the Herr Baron himself; a stiff, snow-white band encircles his apoplectic neck, a couple of inches of corresponding snowiness appear at his wrists; in his fat, white, shapely hand he flourishes a cambric handkerchief of exceeding fineness, with which he daintily caresses his warm-hued nose, whenever he has occasion to refer to his late lamented cousin.

He folds Reine's little, slight figure in his capacious arms theatrically, deposits a kiss upon her cold, unresisting cheek, and from behind the unimpeachable cambric says in broken accents: "Dear child! how awfully sudden this blow! it brings indeed vividly home to us the fleeting nature of our poor mortal existence!

Your cousin Claudia begged me to convey to you the assurance of her tenderest sympathy—she would indeed have hastened to you at once herself, had she not been unfortunately confined to her room by—ahem—a severe cold."

The Reverend Hinton's truth-preaching tongue stumbles a little over the imaginary, commonplace ailment he has improvised to account for his Claudia's non-appearance; Reine, numbed and miserable, takes it all for gospel, and feels dimly grateful to those disturbing forces of nature, which have temporarily incapacitated her cousin's domineering, strong-minded partner: she is silent, and in the conviction that she is immensely comforted and impressed, he fires off a little volley of trite, appropriate texts and truisms, of which her stunned brain fails to grasp the meaning, and which carry little balm to her sorely-wounded spirit.

The Reverend Hinton pauses in his homily and Reine lifts two heavy-lidded eyes to his, and says with startling irrelevancy: "I have begged the Vicomte de Ferrières to make arrangements for my father to be buried here. I am sure he himself would have wished it."

The eminent divine coughs uneasily; he is

visibly discomfited; his ghostly exhortations are not as a rule received with this chilly, irresponsive indifference: at St. Etheldreda's, where a fashionable congregation is privileged to revel in the uninterrupted flow of his eloquence, every sabbath morning for forty consecutive minutes, the fair sheep within his fold are accustomed to hang with rapt attention upon the accents of their bland, beloved shepherd, who glosses over their little peccadilloes with such a tender hand and "never mentions hell to ears polite."

Hinton's preconceived ideas, evolved out of his own imagination, concerning Reine's unregenerate condition, take the form of conviction, as he perceives that the good seed he has sought to sow has apparently fallen among tares; astonishment keeps him silent for the space of a minute; then descending abruptly from the clerical to the curtly secular, he says in less mellifluous tones, as he scans his young cousin's face narrowly, with resentful eyes:

"And pray who *is* the Vicomte de Ferrières?"

"A friend of my father's—and mine."

"A friend of long-standing—elderly?"

"If friendship is measured by time—no," says Reine, with sudden earnestness; "if by kindness

—then certainly Monsieur de Ferrières is the oldest and best friend I have—for the rest you can judge for yourself—there he is," she adds, as the Vicomte, in deep mourning, gentlemanly, erect, distinguished-looking, and not precisely "elderly," comes across the lawn and enters according to his custom at the window, unannounced.

The two men are introduced; while they are smirking affably and expressing the intense pleasure they experience in making each other's acquaintance, they sum up each other mentally as follows—

"Prejudiced, dogmatic, intolerant Englishman—worst variety—clerical."

"Volatile french adventurer—clever imitation of gentleman—after Reine's money."

"Monsieur speaks french?" inquires De Ferrières in his native tongue.

Oh! *wee*—that is—*nong—ung petit—vous savey*," returns the other, with coherent purity; "one so soon forgets when one has no opportunity of speaking," adds Hinton in apology, wisely abandoning the unknown accents, and returning to the shelter of his familiar Saxon.

"Naturally," assents De Ferrières, readily,

with a polite, imperturbable gravity, of which only a well-bred frenchman is capable; while Reine is conscious that her relative's heroic attempt to grapple with a foreign tongue has ended disastrously and in a manner which, only a few hours ago, must inevitably have moved her to irrepressible, undutiful laughter.

The Reverend Hinton drapes his face with an appropriately woe-begone expression, wipes a fictional tear from his steely eye with his snowy handkerchief, and addressing the Vicomte, says, brokenly:

"I little thought, indeed, when my poor cousin met me at Strasburg only a few short weeks ago that we parted for the last time! He seemed in the enjoyment of the most perfect health and strength; so that to the worldling his being called away might seem almost incredible —not so to me, accustomed as I am daily to note the uncertain tenure of our miserable span of life, which is indeed but as a 'fleeting shadow.'"

"Tartuffe!" thinks De Ferrières, uncharitably, as the cambric caresses once more the self-satisfied rubicund visage; and indeed it is to be feared the verdict is not altogether unjust;

since it is a fact, which grief has doubtless effaced from the bereaved inheritor's mind, that, upon the occasion to which he so touchingly refers, after bidding adieu to Challoner and watching his tall stalwart figure disappear in the distance, the heir presumptive to the Girton glories sank back in the corner of the railway-carriage, with a sigh of despair, and in doleful accents confided to his Claudia his conviction that "that fellow Wyverne was good for another thirty years at least."

"Miss Challoner tells me that you have been good enough to make arrangements concerning the—the—interment of my lamented cousin," proceeds Hinton, mastering his emotion without much difficulty.

"I have had the good fortune to be of some very slight service to Mademoiselle—I have acted in accordance with her wishes."

The clergyman dons his pulpit face and falls into one of those harangues to which individuals who conceive the unhappy idea that eloquence is their forte, are liable, upon the slightest provocation; in the privacy of domestic life—or even not infrequently in public—it is the custom of the strong-minded Claudia to curtail

these marital discourses abruptly, probably in the conviction that the privilege of talking uninterruptedly for forty minutes once, in every seven days, is as much as is good for any frail he-mortal—or for the patience of his hearers.

"Of course you can understand, my dear sir, that I should consider it more fitting, more becoming—it would accord, in short, better with my own personal feelings—were the—ahem—remains of my dear cousin transported to Girton, there to rest among the ashes of our ancestors, where I myself humbly hope ere long, released from my pilgrimage in this vale of tears—— etc. etc."

In the absence of the restraining Claudia he maunders on uninterruptedly to the end; throws in a *resumé* of the Challoner pedigree which is intended to dazzle and impress the "volatile adventurer;" in happy ignorance that the said adventurer rejoices in a genealogical tree of equal, if not superior girth and growth—always supposing that any "beggarly foreigner" may be permitted to lay claim to ancient lineage on this side of the Channel, where oddly enough it seems to be considered a British monopoly.

De Ferrières politely resists an inclination to

yawn, and wonders as he listens whether his favourite Thackeray included the "clerical" in his catalogue of snobs.

"But if Miss Challoner wishes it, and you think it would have been the wish of him who is gone—and he was ever more of a foreigner than an Englishman," continues Hinton with a glance heavenwards, as if in apology for his departed relative's erratic propensities—"I should be sorry to make any objection—we will therefore leave the matter as Mounseer—er—er——this gentleman has been good enough to arrange it; and when—" with a mild relapse into woe—"when will the melancholy ceremony take place?"

"To-morrow—everything is in readiness."

"I am quite at a loss to express my gratitude to you," says Hinton patronizingly—"I really do not know how I should have arranged all these sad details in this outlandish place—Miss Challoner and myself are much indebted to you, sir, very much indebted indeed."

"Mademoiselle is aware I trust that I am most happy to serve her in any way in my power," returns De Ferrières quietly.

"Confound the fellow's impudence," is the

Reverend gentleman's unclerical reflection as he turns to Reine and says pompously:

"To-morrow, dear child, I shall have more to say to you; to-day I will not—ahem! distress you by referring to painful but alas! necessary details. Mr. McGrabbe—the family adviser, has accompanied me here; he has in his possession a will and one or two other documents which were confided to him a short time ago by your father. After the fu—er—the last sad offices are concluded—you will speak to me again, my dear young cousin."

Reine remains cold under the charm of Hinton's eloquence and the faint glow of his sham paternal tenderness alike; her impassiveness gives a little sting to his vanity—for even eminent divines are not exempt from that besetting sin of humanity, and when Solomon cried "all is vanity" he made no exception in favour even of the preacher himself; Hinton finds his "dear young cousin" strangely callous and repellent instead of pliant, dutiful and eager for the orthodox consolation and support proper to the circumstances; her demeanour forms indeed a striking contrast to that of certain fair, emotional penitents, whom, in the reprehensible

latitudinarianism of modern Protestantism, he is accustomed to shrive and comfort in the too-zealous exercise of his priestly functions; he does not guess that the girl's true, loyal nature recoils instinctively before the falseness in his: that his little hypocrisies, his sham regrets, are as patent to her as the day, and that she is as fully conscious as he himself of the impatience with which he has waited for his inheritance and the cheerful alacrity with which he has stepped into her dead father's shoes.

De Ferrières with his quick sympathies ever on the alert, comprehends readily what an incubus this pompous wet-blanket must be to Reine in the midst of her suffering; and in a generous spirit of self-sacrifice invites the clergyman to accompany him in his afternoon drive; but the Reverend Hinton in hushed accents declines the offer, remarking that he "thinks a thoughtful, solitary walk will be more—ahem—desirable;" and the Vicomte much relieved, departs, wondering why taking the air upon four wheels should appear to the clerical mind, a more carnal and sinful pastime than a promenade on the divine's own saintly legs.

CHAPTER II.

But O for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice which is still.

TENNYSON.

Ah! vous êtes dévot, et vous vous emportez!

Tartuffe—MOLIÈRE.

REINE has said farewell to the father she loved so devotedly; for the last time she has kissed the peaceful, wise, smiling face, has placed sweet oleander flowers in the strong, bronzed hands, which have not had time to grow white and wan with sickness—has laid scarlet pomegranate blossoms, freshly-gathered, on his breast, and then throwing her fair arms round the hard, unyielding wood, which encloses her darling, has cried in bitterest anguish that she cannot part from him and live; until De Ferrières summoned in her dire perplexity by the bewildered Therèse, has come and carried his little friend, half unconscious, tenderly away, while the rest is done.

The funeral is very simple, for Germany sets

us a good example in this respect; there are no nodding plumes; no useless millinery or depressing paraphernalia of woe: the sun shines merrily, the blue heavens are cloudless; and Challoner who loved all bright and beautiful things so well, goes to his long rest, in the mellow autumn sunlight under a fragrant load of flowers, the offering of loving hands.

At the last moment the Herr Baron appears unexpectedly upon the scene; genuine distress is written legibly upon his puffy, sallow countenance; hearing from von Waldeck of his friend's death, he has hurried from Paris at a moment's notice to pay this last tribute of respect to his memory; Reine is touched and comforted by this little episode more than by all the Reverend Hinton's studied discourses and made-to-order expressions of sympathy.

Von Waldeck is there in full uniform. De Ferrières, the Herr Baron, the Reverend Hinton, and the shrivelled-up family adviser, Mr. McGrabbe (who looks as if he had been manufactured mosaically out of the remnants of old parchments), complete the little procession, with Jules irrepressibly lachrymose and Ali stolid and impassive bringing up the rear.

Mr. Braye the english chaplain, who, like most other people, has conceived a sincere liking for Challoner, although perhaps he did not avail himself of his ministrations quite as regularly as the good little man desired, reads the service in a voice which at times is not quite steady, in a manner which the critical Hinton—whose own delivery leans towards the clerico-pyrotechnic style—mentally characterizes as monotonous and unimpressive.

It is soon over—De Ferrières and von Waldeck, each thinking after his own fashion of the sorrowing little daughter, keeping watch in the empty room, scatter flowers thickly upon the coffin, and turning sadly away leave their dead friend peacefully sleeping in his quiet resting-place, in the shadow of the pine-clad hills.

Later, Reine is summoned to confer with her cousin and the lawyer; she comes, looking so frail, so crushed, so utterly forlorn, that the self-seeking Hinton is touched with a momentary pang of genuine commiseration; and even Mr. McGrabbe is aware of an unusual sensation in the region of the three-cornered fossil which in his anatomy does duty for a heart.

"I would not have troubled you so soon, dear child, were it not that business compels Mr. McGrabbe's immediate return to London," Hinton explains, placing her in a chair.

The lawyer proceeds at once to business: he opens and begins to read her father's will, which together with some other documents he holds in his hand. The will is short and concise, written in Challoner's own hand, un-lawyer-like as to the absence of tautological repetition, but properly signed, attested, and *en règle;* he leaves to his daughter, Reine Challoner, everything which it is in his power to will, and he appoints Jasper Treherne, of —— Court, Temple, Barrister-at-law, sole trustee, executor and guardian of his said daughter until she shall attain the age of twenty-one years—a clause which produces a startling effect upon the testator's reverend cousin, causing him to exhibit well-marked symptoms of an imminent apoplectic seizure.

Challoner's frugal habits have enabled him to save a considerable sum out of the income with which, eschewing the out-at-elbows glories of Girton, he migrated to latitudes in which a man's worth is not gauged by the length of his purse: so that Reine who inherits likewise a

small fortune from her mother, finds herself, for a woman, quite a capitalist.

"Dear me," cries Hinton, irately; "what a very odd will! How very curious that your father should pass me over in silence—his heir and only near relative; and appoint a mere boy his trustee—and what is more incomprehensible still—your guardian."

"Jasper is twenty-six," says Reine, who from her score of years is accustomed to regard thirty as the first stage on the road to old age and decrepitude.

"Just so! a mere boy," assents her cousin; who, himself at six-and-twenty had been already professionally engaged for some years in teaching and reproving those much older and wiser than himself; "and pray, Mr. McGrabbe, when was this will executed?"

"Just before my lamented client left England last year—I have also a letter for Mr. Treherne. Miss Challoner may I beg you to favour me with his present address?"

"He is away—he sailed for South America a few weeks ago," answers Reine, while the colour rushes into her pale cheeks, and the lawyer considerately lowers his eyes and appears immersed

in his papers. "I have already written to him, and I think you had better retain the letter in your possession until he returns—or until we hear from him."

"South America!" cries the clergyman, "whatever induced him to go to that out-of-the-way place? I thought he was a barrister practising in London! Well!" he continues acidly as Reine volunteers no explanation of Treherne's wanderings, "of course this extraordinary—ahem—freak of your father's alters the whole case. He was always eccentric—very eccentric—I may say remarkably so. When do you attain your majority?"

"Next June."

"So soon! Well! my dear Reine until the return of this, I must say most curiously selected guardian, you will I hope make Girton your home at any rate—even afterwards, it would, in my opinion, be more desirable, more becoming, were you to elect to reside with your own relatives, in your own country. Your cousin Claudia deputed me to assure you she was prepared to receive you as—as her own daughter:" (this with some hesitation, as Hinton recalls his Claudia's restiveness under his assertion that

Reine's adoption would be the price she must pay for the privilege of reigning at Girton)—"but, of course she was, like myself, under the impression that I should be your properly appointed, as indeed I am, your natural guardian."

"You are very good; I am very grateful to you—but there will be no occasion to trouble my cousin Claudia. As my father has left me perfectly free in the matter—I shall never go to Girton."

"Never go to Girton! Then in the name of all that is feminine and contradictory, what will you do?"

"I have not yet decided," says Reine indifferently.

"There is only one proper course open to you—there can be no two opinions on the subject," resumes Hinton dictatorially, his manly breast swelling under his beautiful black silk waistcoat; "it is your duty—I say emphatically your duty—to live under the immediate protection of your relatives, as a properly brought up young girl should do—indeed would wish to do; your cousin Claudia is a most superior woman, her companionship would be invaluable to you; her advice and example would tend to correct all

those little eccentricities and extravagances of thought and manner, which you, poor child, have naturally acquired in the course of your desultory, rambling, Bohemian existence—how could it be otherwise? Your faults are not your own—they are the outcome of your father's ——in short of circumstances—I may add most unfortunate circumstances:—under your cousin's guidance you will become—all that an english young lady should be."

"Sir!" cries Reine flashing two angry eyes into his astonished face; "say what you please of me—insult me if you choose; but do not dare to cast the shadow of a slur upon the memory of the best and truest gentleman—the kindest, wisest, most devoted father any girl ever had—and lost."

The Reverend Hinton is speechless with astonishment; the Bohemian experiences have borne apparently even worse fruits than he imagined! Mr. McGrabbe, who is accustomed to family scrimmages, nibbles his pen reflectively, and looks on unmoved.

The clergyman has distinct, well-defined opinions concerning the desirability of the entire subjection of women; on this point, like the great majority, he is still grovelling in the dark-

ness of the remote past with St. Paul, and had he lived a few centuries ago would cheerfully have roasted at the stake, that enlightened champion of the softer sex, the lamented J. S Mill and all such crazy enthusiasts; as is the case with many another sage however, it is not given to Hinton to practise all he preaches, and the very fact that his convictions receive not infrequently a rude shock at the hands of his somewhat emancipated helpmate, tends rather to confirm than weaken his belief in their intrinsic soundness; his fetters, nevertheless, being gilded, sit easily upon him, and when he recalls the magnitude of the sum his grateful papa-in-law disbursed with amiable alacrity, on the occasion of his relieving him of his tyrannical daughter, he feels that he can afford to endure much at her hands with christian humility.

Reine has risen and confronts him with cheeks on which two red spots burn, and her slim, lithe figure drawn up to its full height; even the Spartan Claudia herself, in her least submissive moments, has never dared to speak to him in such a tone, to look at him with the scorn he sees in the eyes of that young girl; he feels

excessively uncomfortable; his vanity is wounded —his priestly love of dictation baulked.

"Facts are facts," he says sneeringly, "however blind people may be to them."

"They are no longer facts when they are wilfully perverted."

"Perverted! such language to me! a clergyman—a man old enough to be your father—are you aware of what you are insinuating?" he cries while his fat face assumes a yet deeper, apoplectic tinge.

"I insinuate nothing—I say plainly that you wilfully misrepresent facts in order to discredit my father's memory; you cavil at the manner in which he chose to bring up his own child, which can be no concern of yours, and you select that child as the recipient—the most unfit recipient—of your unjust and mistaken conclusions; you speak out of your imagination entirely, for you can know nothing of my father's life or mine."

"I know he made a precious mess of both," returns Hinton, expressing himself quite naturally in his anger; "I only wish I *had* been your guardian with a five years' minority to run; I would have taught you the meaning of obedience, respect, submission and a few other

things of which you are probably ignorant; but what alas! can we expect," he adds, casting his steely eyes heavenwards, recovering his lost calmness with an effort; "brought up as you have been in an atmosphere of godless indifference?"

"May I ask if you speak thus delicately, at this juncture, from personal knowledge of my father's life?" asks Reine scathingly, her eyes flashing and her mobile lips quivering with indignation.

"Alas! I know too well what are the lives of such as he—I grieve indeed to say it, dear child—believe me."

"You do *not* know—but I will tell you that in purity of heart and thought, in that perfect charity which thinketh no evil—which has some connection, has it not, with the religion you profess and preach?—my father was nearer, oh! how much nearer, the Great Model you pretend to follow, than if he had spent his life in priestly exercises, secure in his own self-righteousness."

"Spare me, my dear child, the exposition of your theological theories, which are naturally of the crudest description," returns Hinton, with an affected little laugh, waving his plump white

hand in her direction. "Let us return to the practical question, which is this: will you get rid of this useless fellow here—what is his name—Jooles—and his wife, and live decently and respectably with me and my wife at Girton, or will you not?"

"That question, I think, I have already answered; as for dismissing Jules—my father's faithful friend, whom I love—never."

"We do not talk of loving our servants, my dear Reine, in *our* position," says Hinton, with another patronizing wave of the hand, "we consider them—we value them if they deserve it, we——"

"I love Jules, nevertheless," interrupts Reine, with a sob she cannot restrain in her voice; "go to Girton!" she continues passionately, "to grey, dismal Girton, full of horrible memories; to hear *père* maligned—depreciated—to lead that stiff, formal life, without brightness or colour or a ray of genuine, warm, human sympathy, never! I would rather live in a garret with Jules, Therèse, and the dogs, who, at least, all love me."

"These heroics are quite foreign to the question," returns her cousin with cutting coldness;

though, in reality, he is irritated beyond measure at her determined opposition; "I suppose it is natural, brought up as you have been, that you should prefer an erratic, semi-disreputable existence, to the formalities and restrictions of a well-ordered english household; Mr. McGrabbe will bear me witness that I have offered you a home, together with the friendship and protection of myself and my wife; that you have refused to entertain my proposal in the most determined, I might add, insolent manner; I have done my duty as I ever humbly endeavour to do; but remember this, Reine, a girl of your age cannot go wandering about the world with no protectors, but two old servants and a couple of dogs, and a parcel of french adventurers and beggarly foreigners in her train, without that same world drawing very unpleasant conclusions; for this reason it behoves me to urge you, yet once again, to reconsider your decision—to relinquish a course of action which cannot fail, eventually, to bring discredit upon *my* name."

"Sir, I bear my father's name, not unworthily, I hope; that you happen to bear it also, is an accident which concerns me very little," returns Reine, rising; and curtseying to Mr. McGrabbe,

she sweeps from the room with the dignity of a small empress, leaving her reverend cousin staring after her in blank amazement.

The clergyman is haranguing Mr. McGrabbe concerning the obstinacy of women in general and Reine in particular, when De Ferrières comes across the garden, and, pausing at the window, inquires if he may enter.

The way in which the Vicomte comes and goes, like a tame cat about the house, as the Reverend Hinton mentally phrases it, irritates him exceedingly at all times, and doubly so at this moment when his plumes have so recently been ruffled; in answer to the query he replies, with scant courtesy, that he and Mr. McGrabbe are engaged upon business of importance.

This rebuff has no perceptible effect upon De Ferrières, who, coming forward into the room bows politely and says quietly:

"Pardon: I will not detain you many moments; I came in the first place to inquire after Mademoiselle."

"Miss Challoner is naturally much affected by the trying ceremony of this morning—she has been further distressed by the reading of her father's will—and has just retired to her room—

ahem—overcome by emotion," explains Hinton without that strict regard for accuracy, we peccant outsiders are accustomed to expect from members of his cloth.

"I regret indeed to hear it; I fear it will be a long time before she recovers from this terrible shock—ah! and she was of a gaiety so charming! ——I came secondly, hearing you proposed returning very soon to England, to consult you about this house—the agreement terminates I believe in fifteen days—would Mademoiselle wish to secure an extension of a few weeks perhaps, which at this season, without doubt, would easily be arranged."

"Indeed, sir, you know as much—probably a vast deal more of Miss Challoner's plans and intentions than I do myself," rejoins Hinton tartly; "Mr. McGrabbe can bear me witness that I have been urging upon her in every possible manner, the propriety of returning with me to Girton—of dismissing this ridiculous, mountebank sort of fellow—this Jooles—and placing herself under the care of her natural guardians—myself and my admirable wife."

"And Mademoiselle is unwilling to do this?"

"Most unwilling; indeed, she refuses point-

blank to entertain the proposition, and moreover receives my well-meant endeavours to promote her welfare, with a series of the most unpardonable impertinences—I might say without exaggeration—insults."

"Monsieur will pardon me if I say that I entirely fail to recognize the courtesy which never for a moment deserts Miss Challoner in this description—Mademoiselle is probably bewildered with grief, and Monsieur has misunderstood her."

"She seemed on the contrary to be perfectly aware of her own intentions and to express them in a forcible manner which left no room for misconception; to add to the difficulties of the situation, my cousin—a most eccentric, unpractical person—has appointed a mere boy, her guardian—ignoring my existence altogether, without one word of apology or explanation."

"Young Treherne possibly?"

"Exactly. Of all the unpractical, ridiculous, quixotic idiots, that ever were born, my cousin was the biggest."

"Quixotic perhaps—an idiot—oh! very much the reverse," says De Ferrières, quietly, beginning to see where the clerical shoe pinches.

"To appoint a boy of six-and-twenty guardian to a young girl, is an act of drivelling idiocy—there is no other name for it—you agree with me, I am sure, Mr. McGrabbe."

"It is somewhat unusual," says the lawyer, who is Moltkian in the matter of silence.

"The best thing they can do is to marry, and——"

"That was your cousin's wish, I believe," interrupts De Ferrières.

The legal Moltke nods his head affirmatively.

"Well! I wash my hands of the whole affair—I have done my duty, thank God," cries Hinton devoutly; "the girl has money—more than is good for her; she will probably fall a prey to some designing adventurer—" with a withering glance at De Ferrières, who appreciates the thrust thoroughly, and with difficulty maintains his gravity—"but what can one expect, when an Englishman of position, shirks all his duties and responsibilities at home, marries a—ahem—" suppressing the "frenchwoman" hastily in deference to the Vicomte's nationality—"and lives a vagabond, happy-go-lucky life upon the continent, allowing his daughter to grow up haphazard, without proper education, or any

society but that with which she had better have dispensed."

"I have never been able to comprehend," says De Ferrières with perfect good-humour, while the clergyman strides, fuming, up and down the room; "why it is that so many english people entertain that droll idea, that the mere fact of living abroad is in itself a demoralizing process—why they believe that the domestic virtues can take root and flourish only in one soil—that the pure, united, well-ordered family-life can exist in no country but their own! This persistent misconception is the more incomprehensible, because you english travel more than any other nation, yet you judge us—for example—your nearest neighbours, socially, by the exaggerated testimony of a few demoralized writers, who pander to the multitude by depicting a certain section of society, which in your country is ignored—though by no means unrepresented; it would be about as just and sensible, were we to gauge the purity and happiness of english domestic life, solely by the Zola-like reports of unsavoury scandals, with which some of your leading newspapers edify their readers, who would probably shiver in horror at the mere sight of a yellow-covered

french novel. Believe me we have our own quiet, pure, God-fearing home-life just as you have—our *vie de Province* is as respectable—almost as dull as your own! *Mon Dieu!*" adds the Vicomte shrugging his shoulders while Hinton purses up his lips at the harmless exclamation—"I was in London—at the Embassy for some years, and I assure you, during my sojourn, I saw nothing calculated to disturb my conviction that human nature is pretty much the same everywhere—a small minority, good—rather a larger one, hopelessly bad—the great majority hovering between the two extremes; with potentialities for both."

"You were at the Embassy in London," repeats Hinton growing quite affable and losing sight entirely of the rest of the question, while the "french adventurer" theory vanishes into thin air.

"Oh! yes;" says the other indifferently, "before '70."

"You have known my cousin long and intimately I presume?"

"Not very long—of late I saw much of him however. He was one of those men with whom one becomes intimate at once—a delightful companion—a friend in the best meaning of the

word; his death was a terrible shock—and to his daughter, who loved him devotedly—a most crushing blow."

"Naturally—naturally," assents Hinton hastily, with the air of a man who has had enough of the subject; perceiving which, De Ferrières is prompted to pursue the theme maliciously.

"I do not remember ever to have known a man more universally popular—but that is not extraordinary, for he was indeed the embodiment of that ideal which your english word alone expresses—a thorough gentleman."

"In my opinion my cousin was much more of a Frenchman, than an Englishman," remarks Hinton rather grimly,

"You do our nation honour," says the Vicomte wilfully obtuse, bowing politely; and the clergyman finding his little shot has missed fire hastily changes the subject.

"I am compelled to leave early to-morrow," he says, rubbing his carefully-tended hands fussily together, "my duties recall me; I could on no account prolong my stay over Sunday"—(he has, however, three assistant able-bodied young curates, resplendent in the latest fashion of church-millinery at St. Etheldreda's); "should

my young cousin see fit to reconsider her decision —Girton will still be open to her; I am willing to overlook her undutiful, disrespectful conduct; I am ever ready to forgive, as I hope to be forgiven;" an impressive pause—then blandly, pressing the hand De Ferrières extends to him in farewell, "to you, Mossoo, my best thanks are due for your kindness, consideration, and assistance; should you find yourself in England I should be proud to welcome you—at Girton," he adds with pompous affability.

"A thousand thanks," returns the *ci-devant* "french adventurer" politely, with a bow which comprehends the silent McGrabbe; "I beg you to present my compliments to Mademoiselle; Messieurs, I wish you good evening."

The following morning Baden sees the last of the Reverend Hinton, to whom Reine has sent a few words of written, coldly-worded adieu, by "that mountebank fellow—Jooles."

CHAPTER III.

I will a round, unvarnished tale deliver
Of my whole course of love.

SHAKESPEARE.

DE FERRIÈRES cannot help smiling occasionally, as he reflects upon this curious turn of fortune's wheel, which has placed him thus suddenly in the position of guardian and adviser-in-chief *pro tem.* to this beautiful young girl, in whom he has grown so deeply interested.

He has listened with mingled feelings of amusement, satisfaction and perplexity to the Reverend Hinton's account of his interview with Reine; for although the decision at which she has arrived and her rebellion against her cousin's pompous, authoritative manner, cause him no surprise, he is too much a practical man of the world not to recognize the fact, that a good deal of sound truth and common sense underlie the clergyman's somewhat exaggerated language; as he walks this afternoon meditatively, in the direction of the *châlet*, however, his mind mis-

gives him as to the possibility of convincing Reine of the fundamental soundness of her relative's views.

Reine, worldly-wise enough in some ways, is curiously ignorant and unsuspicious of human nature's evil side; hers is one of those rare and fortunate characters, the study of which is apt to awaken, in other than the hyper-critical clerical mind, doubts concerning universal, original sin —which seem to have no affinity with, no interest or part in, anything that is not pure and lovely; the Vicomte is well aware how jealously her easy-going, yet most wide-awake and astute father has guarded this, his one ewe-lamb, from every shadow of evil: he knows that had Reine been brought up under the shadow of Mrs. Grundy's own immaculate tea-tray, even under the spotless wing of the Reverend Hinton himself, she could not be more perfectly pure and guileless in heart and thought; though like a wise man, he has refrained from wasting time in the endeavour to combat the clergyman's erroneous conclusions, concerning his cousin's paternal shortcomings.

De Ferrières finds Reine sitting listlessly in the *salon* with the ever-faithful Coquin snoring

triumphantly on her lap, and Jean-Jacques peacefully reposing at her feet.

Daily she becomes more wan, more shadowy; daily the great, wistful eyes, set in their black circles grow larger and sadder; daily poor Jules makes moan over the heartrending fact, that nothing will induce Mademoiselle to take sufficient wherewith to nourish a fly; that he is persuaded, unless she can speedily be brought to reason, his dear little mistress must inevitably at no distant period rejoin *ce cher ange de père.*

But the Vicomte, although he is shocked and grieved beyond measure at this rapid and complete change, knows very well that youth—sound, healthy youth—does not die of sorrow once in a hundred years; he is untroubled by fears of her approaching demise; but whether the Reine of other days—joyous, arch, provoking, charming—the very embodiment of sunniness, will ever return, is a question upon which he entertains very grave doubts indeed.

"So your cousin has departed?" says De Ferrières, when they have interchanged greetings and he has scolded her a little playfully, after a critical survey of the suffering, half-averted face, whose quivering lips and heavy eyes tell

their own mute tale of sleeplessness and long fasting.

"*Dieu merci!* Yes."

"You did not get on very well with him?" he continues with apparent carelessness, removing into the background Challoner's favourite easy chair, which stands opposite to Reine, and bringing forward another, in which he seats himself.

"Ah! if you could have heard him speak of —of—*père*—and to me—so soon!"

"He is like many other well-meaning people, very much wanting in tact and not overburthened with discretion or delicacy."

"Delicacy!" repeats Reine, half-indignant, half-tearful—"if you could only have heard his misrepresentations—his insinuations—about *père* —about me—has he not Girton? Could he not be content with that, which he has been longing for, for years?"

"Your father's nature and your cousin's are as wide apart as the poles; believe me, *chère* Mademoiselle, it is impossible that a man of his stamp, who trots round and round a little circle and fancies it the world, should have any affinity with the large-minded, liberal, un-pharisaical

atmosphere which you have had the happiness to breathe; do not distress yourself concerning your cousin's injustice; he is unjust because he does not know any better, which surely is his misfortune; I assure you, he treated me to a tolerably exhaustive exposition of his views regarding your past, present and future—but when I found that you had decided not to place yourself even temporarily under his care, I did not attempt to correct his erroneous impressions, but took refuge in generalities; for it saves a great deal of trouble in this life, if one divests oneself early of the mistaken idea, that by the superior force of one's own opinions, one can revolutionize those of others."

"My cousin knows absolutely nothing about my past or my present, and for my future, if *père* had wished him to be connected with it in any way—he would not—he would have acted differently."

"Ah! Mademoiselle, if we only permitted ourselves to converse upon subjects we understand, what a silent world this would be!"

"Did it not make your blood boil to hear *père*"—(she speaks the familiar word with inexpressible reverence and tenderness)—"*père*, whom

you knew so well—so misrepresented, so maligned?"

"At my age the blood does not boil easily," returns the Vicomte, shrugging his shoulders; then seeing that she looks pained and has evidently mistaken his meaning, he adds, hurriedly, with an extra-paternal air: "I mean, my dear child, that the effort to overcome the prejudices of others, as I said just now, is a task to which no sensible man addresses himself—unless he is a very young man—and very young men, as a rule, are *not* very sensible. Reflect a little; what harm can your cousin's mistaken opinions do to your father? To those who knew him, and as a natural sequence, loved and valued him, is not his memory far above the reach of all narrow-minded criticism? It is very difficult, I know, to be tolerant to the intolerance of others, but reflect a little philosophically and you will admit I am right."

"I am not philosophical; least of all, now—and if I live to the age of Methuselah—which God forbid—I shall never be philosophical enough to hear my father abused, without being pained beyond expression."

"Naturally, *chère enfant*—do not imagine I

am defending the more than questionable taste of Monsieur le Curé; it is only that to an old man like me," adds De Ferrières, with a sigh; "abuse, unjust, and unmerited—the outcome of ignorance and a carping spirit of self-satisfied narrow-mindedness—seems to lose its sting—it is beneath contempt, and life is too short to trouble oneself concerning it——Your cousin wished you to accompany him to England?"

"Yes! to live at Girton—to see him installed in *père's* place—Girton, which has already too many painful memories for me—ah! the dreariness of those mouldy walls which look as if they were made to match the sky."

"So that you refused?"

"Naturally seeing that my good, kind, considerate *père* had left me free to choose and had mercifully appointed——"

"That is the head and front of the offending," remarks the Vicomte, as Reine comes to a halt, abruptly.

"But why? why?" she continues, hurriedly; "in a few months I shall be of age—I am no rich heiress or personage of importance, to cast additional lustre upon the master of Girton and his wealthy wife, who, until a few days ago,

were scarcely aware I existed; they ought to feel thankful that I elect not to trouble them."

"It is conceivable that the 'admirable' Claudia may possibly see cause for gratitude in that fact," De Ferrières says, smiling; "a full-blown rose, already a little on the wane, does not gain by contrast with a fresh, young bud; but your cousin is one of those people, if I mistake not, who must, to use your english phrase, have a finger in every pie; he is of an illiberal, tyrannical disposition, and the merest shadow of power or authority is sweet to him; I do not suppose he is broken-hearted at your refusal, but a stab to one's vanity hurts, however little one may care for the main question at issue."

"He wanted me to send away Jules! Of what then are such people composed? After years of faithful service! He called him a mountebank; oh! he is a vulgar man—my cousin Hinton; not outwardly, but at heart; who would believe that the same blood ran in his veins as in *père's?*"

"He is not precisely distinguished, but I can comprehend that the excellent Jules, *en toilette de matin,* might prove something of an eyesore to the well-regulated english mind."

"Because he looks like a human being instead

of a wax-work figure, powdered, bewigged, bedizened like those ridiculous, useless, english flunkies! Does that make him less faithful—less devoted? Oh! Vicomte, I believe you are more than half inclined to go over to the enemy!"

"Quite the reverse; but it helps one sometimes in this curious existence, to cultivate the habit of looking at a question from as many sides as possible; but now, *chère* Mademoiselle, will you tell me, as you are disinclined to accept your cousin's offer—which I find quite intelligible—what you propose to do; I do not ask, as I think you know, from idle curiosity."

"Ah! what does it, or anything else matter—now?"

"It matters very much, my dear little friend, both to you and to all who care for you; your time here—in this house—I must remind you, expires in a fortnight."

"But I can keep it longer—I cannot leave it—I cannot leave Baden and *père*."

"Yet believe me it would be wiser, better for you to go away—into other scenes—away from so many painful memories."

"Do you think I shall not carry those

memories with me, wherever I go? If they are painful, they are also all I have left," she answers, and looks at De Ferrières with two wistful, beseeching eyes, whose appeal he cannot resist.

"Then shall I arrange about an extension of the agreement—for how long—three—six months?"

"When will Jasper be here?" she inquires, turning her face away.

"Not before three months at the earliest."

"Then will you take the *châlet* for six months longer?"

"And at half the rent, then, seeing that winter is close at hand, and they will think themselves only too lucky to get a tenant at all; but let me recommend you to reflect before you bind yourself to remain here through the cold and frost and snow—Baden in summer and Baden in winter are two very different affairs."

"All places and all seasons are the same to me now," says Reine, listlessly, and De Ferrières does not contradict her; indeed he half envies this belief of youth in the eternal endurance of anything—even of pain."

"It shall be arranged," he says, gently—"have you any other commands for me?"

"No, indeed, Vicomte; I assure you all the trouble I have already given you weighs heavily upon my conscience—when I think of all you have done for me and remember that a year ago you did not even know me, that——"

"Ah! Mademoiselle, but it is cruel to remind me of that unhappy time;" interrupts De Ferrières, nipping Reine's expressions of gratitude in the bud; "I was just about to give you a little further advice—you need not follow it, you know, unless you have a fancy to be very original—leave Jules and Therèse here and go away for a few weeks at any rate."

"But where then am I to go—and alone?"

"Oh! not at all alone—I have a plan—listen a little—I have a sister, who is a widow, her husband fell in '70; she lives now in retirement near Avignon, far away from the din of republican Paris; you would suit each other admirably; she is musical; she has literary tastes; she is a charming companion—charming even to me, her brother—*enfin*, will you consent to pay her a little visit of a few weeks, so that you may repose yourself in another scene, far from this place where you have suffered so much of late?"

"But your sister does not even know me; it

would be unfair to burthen her with a visitor—so *triste*, so uninteresting," says Reine, wondering how she can manage to escape the proposed ordeal without appearing ungracious.

"I will undertake all the responsibility," he returns, contemplating the "uninteresting" little person opposite to him, with an amused smile.

"Indeed, I could not bear to go away—among strangers—just yet," she answers, pleadingly, speaking the plain truth, for indeed she is too listlessly wretched to succeed in framing polite excuses. "I had a letter from Mrs. Fretwell this morning, asking me to go to her—but I could not—you remember her?"

"But, yes; the pretty little woman with the speaking machine for a husband, who has a patent for remodelling the universe, after a pattern of his own! Ah! but Mademoiselle, that would be different; I can imagine that Monsieur, your countryman—a severe trial at all times—would be doubly so to you just now; well! Germaine—my sister, on the contrary——*enfin*—later perhaps we will speak of it again," adds De Ferrières, who possesses the rare virtue of patience with a spirit crushed and wounded to the verge of unreasonableness, and tact enough to see that

it must work out its own cure, with the aid of youth and time. "That is one piece of advice; I have yet another in reserve; if you stay here alone, and I understand, though I regret your disinclination to go away—you will die of *ennui*."

"*Tant mieux*."

"But to 'die of *ennui*,' is a figure of speech; you will be bored to death, and you will *not* die."

"*Tant pis*."

"But seriously, is there no one you would like to come and stay with you? You cannot lead a perfectly solitary life—*voyons*."

"There is no one—I want no one."

"Then we must endeavour to find some intelligent, delightful, middle-aged lady who will come and take care of you; oh! do not shake your head; they exist, these charming middle-aged ladies; it is mistaken vanity on the part of youth to imagine it possesses an exclusive monopoly of all that is attractive," says the Vicomte, wilfully misinterpreting Reine's rather determined gesture of negation.

"Ah! but what an idea! If I am to die of *ennui*, why add to my affliction the addition of an uncongenial companion?"

"But you are *not* to die—the companion would the antidote; you could occupy yourselves

with quarrelling; a little dispute is sometimes an excellent tonic."

"I do not know how to quarrel—*père* never taught me," she says with a sigh and De Ferrières who, at another time, would have assured her laughingly that this undesirable accomplishment is an instinct in the gentler sex rather than an acquired talent, looks into her sad little face and is silent.

He is wondering how he shall most conclusively and least offensively convince Reine of the fact that the delightful, ideal middle-aged personage, whose outline he has hazily sketched, is in reality a substantial, social incubus, which sooner or later, expediency will oblige her to hang about her neck.

"It is very unfortunate that Treherne is away, your father has probably confided to him, in the letter of which you spoke, his wishes concerning your future," he says musingly.

"Perhaps:" her white cheeks dye themselves crimson as they have a trick of doing of late whenever Jasper's name is mentioned.

"Your father I am sure never for a moment contemplated your living quite alone," continues De Ferrières, who has very distinct ideas regard-

ing the probable contents of that letter: "he who was so much a man of the world—who watched over you with such constant care—none the less vigilant because unobtrusive—he knew very well that in this same censorious world, a girl especially if she be young and beautiful—cannot live alone, without—without a multitude of *mauvaises langues* busying themselves about her; what does your Shakespeare say"—he adds impressively, wrestling in his droll accent, with the great british bard in the original, holding up a warning finger at this forlorn little Ophelia. "*Be zou chaste az ice, az peure az sno-o-w, zou shalt not escape calumnee.*"

"Who will trouble themselves about me?" asks Ophelia despondently; "I am too insignificant—and it seems to me I am not any more young, but a century or two old; and beautiful I never was, and now I scarcely know my own face in the glass."

"If that were all strictly true—you will forgive the insinuation that it is not," says Mentor smiling—"it would not detract from the soundness of my argument; you cannot live alone, *chère petite amie*, believe me, who am old enough, and who have seen enough of this pleasant world to know; it is undesirable—impossible from all

points of view—social, physical, psychical, sanitary—every one. It would be the last thing your father would have wished—the very last thing of which Treherne—your guardian, would approve," concludes De Ferrières in a matter-of-fact tone, but in his heart convinced that he has fired a Machiavellian shot."

"Baden is a passably dull, innocent little village enough now-a-days," he resumes, seeing that Reine remains silent; "but it cannot boast a perfectly Arcadian simplicity, any more than any other place—*du reste*, Diana herself, if she set up housekeeping in these evil, tea-consuming times, would not escape the scandalmongers."

"But I do not understand; how can there be harm when no harm is done?" asks Reine lifting her puzzled eyes, enquiringly to his.

"*Ma foi!* Mademoiselle, the philosophy of social life, under its present conditions, is one of those delicate subjects which will not bear dissection or ventilation, I think; only after much experience do we begin to comprehend this curious code—its fine distinctions, its shams, shifts, and hairsplittings: its hypocrisies, small meannesses and comfortable gospel of expediency; we have the advantage of living in an age in which

people, and especially women, are judged, not so much by what they actually do or leave undone, as by the motives and actions others are good enough to attribute to them; and by their outward adherence to certain hard and fast rules, laid down by society's "Vehmgericht," the infraction of the least of which is supposed to furnish conclusive evidence of the shakiness of the whole moral fabric."

"And you think I should infringe one of those inexorable laws by living quietly alone—(alone as it has pleased Heaven to leave me)—without a duenna, a domestic petticoated detective, a moral watch-dog?" Reine asks bitterly.

"The *world* will undoubtedly think so, and make itself exceedingly disagreeable in consequence, an art in which it is a proficent; those who are wise—by which in this instance I mean those who value a quiet peaceful existence—do not fight windmills—they go with the tide; to be happy, even moderately happy, in this life, it is necessary to be cut out after the pattern of one's neighbours; one must have the same tastes, aspirations, interests, pettinesses—there is nothing of which people are so intolerant as the faintest symptom of originality—some few affect to admire it, especially if they fancy they detect it in

themselves; but in others they resent it—Mademoiselle, let me beg of you, if you desire tranquillity, to aim at being commonplace—assume a virtue if you have it not; discard that Utopian idea, that given a thing harmless in itself, the world will refuse to see harm in it; do not imagine for a moment that it is the sensible, liberal, reflecting minority which is powerful—which it is wise to propitiate. Oh! not at all, it is the ignorant, the prejudiced, the unthinking, the pharisaical majority—the majority of fools—which reigns supreme over all social questions and not a few others, besides."

"And you wish me to join that majority?" asks Reine with the ghost of one of her old sunny smiles.

"Yes," assents De Ferrières, half-sadly, half-playfully; "with certain restrictions; outwardly at least, for the sake of your own happiness; if you set up your little Trappiste establishment here *par example*, do you think people would leave you in peace? You are not of those fortunate mortals concerning whom others do not care to trouble themselves. A young lady of position, beautiful, accomplished, living quite alone in a villa at Baden-Baden—reformed, regenerated, respectable Baden if you will, yet to which,

in british nostrils especially a *soupçon* of the unsavoury odour of the gaming tables still clings! *Mon Dieu!* I can hear the deafening chorus of your compatriots—'Oh—h—shocking—how shocking—' of your german friends; '*Aber nein! ach!* a mad Englishwoman, *natürlich;*' I can see the look of mild astonishment and the shrug of the shoulders of my own more philosophical, but scarcely less censorious countrymen! Ah! my dear little friend, believe me you are too young, too charming, too unsuspicious of evil, thank God, to fight the world's battle alone."

"The world—the world," repeats Reine impatiently as the uncomfortable conviction forces itself upon her, that with certain subtle distinctions concerning herself personally, the Vicomte is saying pleasantly, very much the same things as her cousin said, unpleasantly; "what constitutes my world after all? Yourself, two old servants and two dogs—will anyone of you think better of me if I surround myself with a regiment of decayed gentlewomen?"

"No individual can separate his or herself from the mass and say, thus far shall my interests, my sympathies, my intercourse with my fellow-creatures go and no farther; man

after all is a sympathetic animal—woman still more so—you superlatively so; the world legislates broadly, for large communities; it has neither time for, nor patience with, isolated cases; besides among the dwellers in your little world you omitted a very important one—Treherne—unless my penetration is very much at fault your well-being is dearer to him far, even than his own."

"When he comes back—that is, if he does—I shall follow Hamlet's advice and get me to a nunnery," she says, while her fingers twist and untwist nervously, Coquin's velvet brown ears.

"A what?" cries De Ferrières in genuine astonishment.

"A convent; a religious society of some sort."

"In the first place you are a Protestant," he remarks with a sigh of relief over that comforting reflection.

"There are Protestant convents—sisterhoods."

"True—I had forgotten that your religion had shown a tendency of late to advance backwards; but the idea of you as a nun, *mon Dieu!* it is too amusing! Do not be angry with me if I laugh a little! When I picture you to myself with those distracting, most mundane little curls, hidden away under a great starched cap—your face struggling to don a correctly severe,

sanctimonious expression—failing utterly—the bare idea is to make one *crever* with laughter! Monsieur your cousin presides perhaps over some private retreat, in which you might be received, so that you could enjoy the privilege of his ministrations—where that poor disconsolate Treherne and myself could come twice a year to look at you through a little '*grille!*' Ah! no, believe me, you have no vocation that way: and pardon, but are you not a little inconsistent—do you not strain at a gnat and propose to swallow a camel? You rebel at the mere mention of my delightful, middle-aged lady, and yet you are desirous of being guarded and barked at by a whole pack of black-coated watch-dogs. Mademoiselle Reine," continues De Ferrières, dropping his tone of badinage and speaking quite seriously; "what are we here for, unless it is to do the work before us honestly and to the best of our ability? The individual who in order to shirk his or her responsibilities shuts him or herself up in a religious institution, where he may foster his own morbid selfishness, often at the expense of others, is not only, in my opinion, no saint, but a contemptible, cowardly person; and I am moreover certain that in your heart you agree with me."

"I thought so too—when I was happy," Reine says brokenly, "but now I am so miserable—I long only for rest; better than all I should like to die, but since that is unlikely, it seems to me, that life in a convent, must be the nearest approach to it! Ah! Vicomte, you think me weak and foolish; how should you understand this dreadful feeling—you have never known unhappiness like mine."

She covers her face with her hands and falls to sobbing quietly, despairingly, while De Ferrières looks at her with tenderest pity in his dark kind eyes, which grow troubled as the ready tears fall fast and he feels how utterly powerless he is in the presence of such grief as this.

"In one hour—one minute—to have lost all," she moans presently; "if there had been some warning, if I could have watched him, tended him, cared for him—learnt by degrees that we we must part—I could have borne it better."

"My child, you are too unselfish to wish that really; could you have borne to see the father you loved so well, worn out by some painful, lingering disease—languishing hour by hour? Let the remembrance of all you were to him through the best years of his life comfort you; if

you had seen half the terrible human suffering I have seen, you would understand how it is that when my time comes, I hope just such a calm, painless death may be mine."

Reine makes no response, but cries on, not passionately, but with a sort of calm despair more distressing to witness; De Ferrières rising, walks over to the window and looks out into the garden, once so bright and pretty, now strewn with dead, brown leaves and petals of faded, rain-beaten flowers; the grief of his litte *protégée* is a sore trial to his philosophy: it is a long time since the emotional side of his nature has been so actively engaged; presently the litttle, catching sighs, the rebellious sobs she cannot quite restrain, which cause his kind heart such distress, grow less frequent; by degrees they cease, and casting a furtive glance over his shoulder, the Vicomte perceives that Reine is tearless, lying back, with closed eyes in her chair; he returns and leaning against a cabinet which stands almost behind her, says with some hesitation, in a voice which has not quite the clear, even, pleasant ring, of his usual one :—

"You think I cannot understand your unhappiness; that I have never known what it is to be miserable—*mon Dieu!* who does not, I wonder?

Would it encourage you to hope and believe that better things may yet be in store for you, if I confessed to you, that when I was not much older than you are now, I was as wretched as it is possible I think for a human being to be; the world seemed a blank to me, life not worth living, as it does to you. My case indeed was even more cruel than your own—yes—I affirm it—because my misfortunes were the result of treachery in others, whom I had trusted implicitly, and judging this great world *en gros* out of my own little experiences, as one too often does, I lost all my belief in human nature: I decided that all men were liars—all women heartless, mercenary conscienceless coquettes, and I found in my onward journey so many striking confirmations of this theory that it took me a long time to discover its fallacy—*que voulez vous*—? At twenty-five one is not a philosopher—at that age on the contrary philosophy is a bad symptom; a young philosopher is as a rule not an agreeable personage. Mademoiselle Reine, I confess it—I cried over my broken toys—I moaned and maundered over my shattered hopes, like any other mawkish, sentimental, weak-minded Werther."

He pauses, and Reine says, after a moment's silence :

"But surely that very treachery must have taken the sting out of your suffering—you could not value the love or friendship of those who had proved themselves so unworthy."

"Ah-h—that is another fallacy of youth—of untried, headstrong, intolerant youth, which grasps only broad generalities and has no patience for fine distinctions! It is only an entirely egotistical nature, I think, whose love turns to hatred or indifference, directly its vanity receives a stab: your theory would be all very well if one's emotions were all neatly docketed, and stowed away in convenient little pigeon-holes in our brains, so that we could take them out, and after due reflection apply them as seemed most expedient to us—unfortunately for suffering human nature, Love is free, unfettered and spontaneous—or it is nothing—it is often enough the lot of poor humanity to continue to adore an idol, long after one has discovered that it is made out of the commonest clay."

"But to be quite hopeless—to feel as I feel—you must have loved and lost one person who was all in all to you—as I loved *père*."

"There are sufferings and sufferings; most people I think would agree with me that mine was the hardest to bear; you have lost your

father it is true and no one can ever replace him; but you have the memory of twenty years of perfect sympathy, affection, delightful companionship—without one dark shadow—to comfort you—how many people do you think are as fortunate?"

"But it is gone! and then you are a man; it is so different."

"Since when has man been exempt from suffering?"

"Not that—but you have so many other interests—pursuits—resources; it cannot be the same to you; if a woman loses all she loves, what has she left?"

"Not much," says De Ferrières—then adds very gently: "but you have *not* lost all; there are many sorts of love—do not fear that you will die of famine—look at me, and take courage," he goes on more lightly, "I have gone through the furnace, yet am I not the most airy, volatile, careless young bachelor of fifty you can conceive, even in a nation which is a by-word for frivolity and instability?"

"Do you remember," he continues, abruptly changing his tone, "the first evening you dined with me in Paris?"

"Perfectly," returns Reine, sadly, wandering

back in spirit to the Vicomte's pretty rooms with her lost father well and happy at her side.

"You remember then perhaps that in my study you came unexpectedly upon a picture behind a curtain?"

"Yes."

"That is the representation of the original apple of discord of my history."

"I was so annoyed with myself for committing that stupid blunder."

"Oh! but not at all! there is no one to whom I would more willingly present my little domestic skeleton: I will tell you the story of my little romance if it will not fatigue you—if I grow prolix—*ennuyeux*—protest; one's own grievances are always a most seductive subject, you know, Mademoiselle. More years ago than I care to count, I espied that same small skeleton for the first time, skating towards me—exactly as you have seen her in the picture—on a lake in Stockholm; within a few feet of me she stumbled, —I thought she must fall, and instinctively held out my arm, to avert the catastrophe; in a second, however, she recovered herself, and with a bend of the head in acknowledgment of my good intentions and an irrepressible smile at my discomfiture, with one turn of the skate quickly

eluded me, like some airy, intangible sprite, leaving me planted there, with outstretched arms —looking like a fool; that first meeting has always seemed to me curiously significant of our subsequent relations—as she tricked me, eluded me then, so she did in the future, leaving me still—looking like a fool.

"She was Swedish—I think, even at this distance of time, she was beautiful—charming; indeed I am sure of it, for in manner, voice and appearance you so often recal her to me (Reine holds up a hand in deprecation); there is, however, one important point in which you differ—you are burthened with a troublesome superfluity, which in her was most conspicuous by its absence; that assemblage of emotions, affections, and sentiments, which it is the custom to term a heart, was, I believe, entirely unrepresented in the anatomy of my skeleton, though I was long in discovering this fact—longer in bringing myself to admit it. Mademoiselle Reine, old, grey-headed bachelor as I am now, sceptical, world-hardened, I do not know how to describe to you, how utterly idiotic I was in those youthful, foolish, delightful days—how I loved, believed and trusted! Love—enthusiasm—happiness—are they not youth's monopolies, in which sober,

plodding, middle-age may claim no part? Well! you will have the goodness to picture to yourself a young man one degree more blind, more foolish than any young man of your acquaintance under the spell of his first serious infatuation.

"I was so much in earnest that in two months we were engaged—there were difficulties—other views for my beloved, who was the only child of an ambitious father—but I surmounted them all; in those days my father and elder brother were both living; I was simply Tristan De Ferrières, a lieutenant of cavalry, without any very brilliant prospects to recommend me.

"My leave expired—I was on sick-leave after a sharp attack of fever—we parted with the usual vows of love and constancy eternal: I was supremely miserable, but consoled myself with the reflection that in a few months my *fiancée* would be in Paris, in the vicinity of which I was fortunately quartered: in due time she arrived; I was in paradise; there was no change in her; she was as charming, as fascinating, as irresistible as ever; I, as devoted—she as willing to be adored—for I need not tell you it was I, who loved—she, who allowed herself to be loved—a fact I did not realize until long afterwards, when I had regained possession of my sanity."

"In those halcyon days I was further blessed with a friend—a friend who had grown up with me from boyhood—to whose Damon I had played Pythias ever since I could remember. Damon, poor fellow, had been the confidant of my love, the receptacle of all my sighs and woes: I hastened to present him to my beloved: I must tell you that he was extremely *beau garçon*, distinguished, clever, of good family; that he was already in possession of a title, for which baubles, as you know, some people have a pronounced weakness—altogether a richer, more desirable *parti* than myself.

"The day before that fixed for our marriage, my *fiancée* had parted from me as gaily, apparently as affectionately as ever—it has often struck me since what an excellent actress was lost to the stage, in her; late in the evening, Damon, looking, I will do him the justice to say, excessively foolish, came to my rooms and to my astonished ears, revealed all the details of the little domestic tragedy, which had been playing itself out, before my blinded, infatuated eyes: I had remarked that the two were upon excellent terms, and in my fatuity had rejoiced in the fact, seeing in it a further proof of the

complete accord which existed between Damon and myself; poor boy! the sympathy of our thoughts and tastes had been so perfect, that I sometimes think he was guilty of no premeditated disloyalty, but was only suffering from a confusion of ideas! *Enfin!* it seemed my beloved had been mistaken—they adored each other—she would rather die than marry any other man;—dread of the inevitable scandal—consideration for me, had, he averred, kept them silent hitherto—only at the eleventh hour, they had found it impossible to sacrifice their happiness to a mistaken idea of honour—and much more to the same effect—there is a droll sameness about all these histories, is there not?

"For the moment I was paralyzed, for I had deluded myself so completely. When my clearness of vision began to return, my first impulse was to shoot my successful rival through the head; my second to do that kind action for myself; then I meditated a duel, which I suppose, strictly speaking, was the proper salve to apply to my wounded honour, but although I think there is a good deal to be said in favour of duelling, I could not bring myself, even in that first bitterness of feeling, to raise my hand against my friend, *Dieu merci!* or to injure any

one who was presumably dear to *her:* after all there was little satisfaction to be derived from making my little feather-headed lady-love the heroine of a nine-days' wonder; especially as upon inquiry I became convinced, that her father, who had been opposed to our union from the first, had pulled the strings behind the scenes, in a manner which had resulted in my ultimate defeat; if I had slaughtered the trio, however, I could neither have regained my lost love, nor my friend. I said to myself, '*à quoi bon?*' Eventually I left the army and set out quite tamely on my travels."

"And what became of her?" asks Reine, as De Ferrières pauses.

"She married Damon—he occupies a distinguished position in diplomacy now."

"And she is happy?"

"If the indulgence of every conceivable extravagance and caprice means happiness—oh! yes."

"I cannot imagine your loving so deeply any one so shallow and heartless."

"When you are as old as I am you will know as I told you just now, that men and women are seldom loved on account of, or in proportion to, their intrinsic worth; love rests on no such secure, stable foundation; a subtle sympathy, a taste in

common, a trick of manner, even a tone in the voice, may strike the fatal spark; who can define, that which is indefinable?"

"But you are no longer unhappy now?" she says softly, turning her pretty head to look up at him, where he stands, still, a little behind her, in shadow.

"Unhappy, oh! no," he returns with a laugh, coming nearer; "my best consolation is in the reflection, what a hum-drum middle-aged couple we should have been by this time: when I note the fiasco some people make of their lives, who have the good fortune to espouse the affinity of their youth, *ma foi!* I am more than content to be a mateless, old bachelor: so that when I happen occasionally to meet the Damon of other days—now alas! transformed by Father Time into an elderly, irascible gentleman, with a decidedly gouty tendency, and a pronounced leaning towards embonpoint—I am able to inquire with the politest sang-froid, concerning the health of Madame la Marquise—not without a secret thanksgiving, that but for the freak of fortune I have related to you, Damon might be inquiring after Madame La Vicomtesse. So that you see chère Mademoiselle Reine, we have all of us our troubles, our disappointments, our escapes—but we have also our compensations—our consolations;

for the more fortunate, there is also a fair allowance of bright sunshine, to light up the dull, grey level of monotony—let us hope that you are one of those, upon whom it will shine most kindly."

As De Ferrières ceases speaking he lays a hand on the back of Reine's chair; he sees that his recital has interested her, and distracted her thoughts for the moment from her own sorrows; so far his object is won; she, on her side, is not one whit deceived by his tone of half-cynical raillery; she knows that the very bitterness with which he jests at the scar, is in itself proof, how deep the wound has been; as he draws near, she stretches out a hand towards him and says simply, "Yes! I am very selfish, I think: you too have been most unhappy—I am so sorry—but some day I hope you will find some one more worthy of you, who will atone to you for all you have suffered."

"Too late—too late! That hackneyed refrain of bungling humanity! No, no, the *rôle* of consoler to a Lothario of fifty, is not one calculated to awaken feminine enthusiasm, little friend;" he answers patting the small hand, paternally, which she has of her own free-will confided to him, and depositing it, beside its fellow, gently, upon her lap.

"Who painted that picture," Reine asks after a moment's silence.

"An artist who knew the original well; I had it painted as a perpetual reminder of the evanescent nature of feminine constancy: as a symbol of that treacherous minx, happiness—which we pursue so pertinaciously, with outstretched, impatient arms—which has a knack of slipping through them so adroitly, just as we try to clasp it."

"I do not think that was altogether the reason you had that picture painted and hung up—behind a curtain," she says, shaking her head reflectively.

"He smiles but makes no reply and presently taking up his hat stands before her, ready to depart.

"To-morrow I am going away, for two—perhaps three days; will you be *gentille* and promise me not to reduce Jules to despair by refusing to eat, sleep, and do all that you ought to do, so that on my return I may find you one degree less like a small, pale ghost?"

"You are going away!" she repeats in such distressed accents, that De Ferrières surprised looks quickly and searchingly into her face, but her eyes meet his with a look of genuine, unembarrassed friendship, pure and simple, shining in their dark depths, which the vainest coxcomb on earth could not misconstrue; he comprehends that

just now he is her only friend, her one resource; that his absence means absolute solitude to her—nothing more—and he says to himself; "assuredly my friend, thou art in danger of becoming a greater ass, than ever thou wast in thy youth;" and aloud, "for two or three days only Mademoiselle; in the meantime you will reflect concerning my watch-dog suggestion and tell me the result on my return. If you will permit 'Smeet' to drive you into the country while I am absent, it will give me pleasure and be a charity to the horses. 'Smeet' is a careful driver; you can trust yourself to him—I have given myself very much trouble in teaching him."

"Many thanks," says Reine, not without a smile at the Vicomte's comforting assurances, when she recalls the dangers she has already braved behind those famous *trotteurs;* for she knows that "Smeet" is a magnificent whip, and that the master's Jehuship, makes the despair of the man—but the best of men have their weak points, and De Ferrières' driving, is, in more senses than one, a very weak point indeed.

"Good-by then—or rather—*à revoir: Jean-Jacques, mon ami,* and you Coquin lazy, enviable rascal that you are, see that you take good care of your mistress."

CHAPTER IV.

Here, in seclusion, as a widow may,
The lovely lady whiled the hours away,
Pacing in sable robes the statued hall,
Herself the stateliest statue among all.

LONGFELLOW.

VON WALDECK comes daily to inquire of that faithful custodian Jules, how it fares with his young mistress; the two have not met since he went away patient and hopeful to the manœuvres, to return after a three weeks' absence to find all so changed, and Reine so desolate.

There is an end to the pleasant afternoons in the garden, where, in happier days, he would find the father and daughter, sitting together under the shady trees, chatting or reading, while the dogs, lying lazily in the sunshine, waged war indefatigably against the irrepressible flies.

On these occasions Reine had converted the Herr Lieutenant to the innovation of five-o'clock tea — real english tea, as she assured him, not continental hot water bewitched — which she made deftly with her own hands, assuming meanwhile, a pretty little air of importance, which set the adoring warrior dreaming dreams,

of a fair young *châtelaine*, in an old castle on the Rhine, in which that white-robed, girlish figure played the chief part, where she should make endless tea, which he would cheerfully and obediently swallow, unto his life's end.

Sometimes when he had no duty, he would stay and dine with them, and then followed those delightful evenings at the piano, while his violin sang sweet accompaniment, and he went on dreaming still, of that old Rhine castle where the years would fly only too swiftly in one perpetual harmony of peaceful communion with the lady of his love.

But now all this is changed; he no longer comes gaily along the Allée, handsome, smart as kind nature and the paternal discipline of the Fatherland can make him from top to toe, pausing at the bridge to discover whether the white dress is in its accustomed place, fluttering between the intervening rose-bushes; the garden is empty now, chill autumn has taken possession, and following upon the scorching rainless heat, has made havoc already among the broad catalpa leaves; sorrow has fallen upon the pretty little house, and sadly Max walks ceremoniously round to the front door gravely to inquire of Jules concerning the health of Mademoiselle; he does

not venture to ask to see her; he would not for worlds intrude upon her in these early days of her bereavement; nor does that lynx-eyed Cerberus, Monsieur Galette, invite this brilliant, epauletted german wolf, to enter and view the solitary white lambkin, he guards so faithfully; so Max retraces his steps, hoping for better days, and gets through the time as best he may, with the assistance of that curious admixture of physical hard work, cards, music, billiards, dominoes and beer in unknown quantities, which make up the sum total of these formidable modern warriors' existence.

Another constant visitor at the *châlet* is little Mr. Braye, the mild-eyed shepherd in charge of the english flock; he brings little orthodox crumbs of comfort, seasoned with gentle lessons of resignation, which he strews with kindly prosiness in the way of this poor orphaned lamb; and which she strives humbly to take to heart; Jules who, it is to be regretted, has not as a rule that veneration for the priestly calling which it deserves, recognizes the good intentions of this member of the brotherhood and admits him without misgiving into the fold.

The chaplain's "gracious lady" also descends upon Reine with more secular consolation; she is a florid, full-blown native personage of the

prevailing type of loveliness, with an abundance of towy hair, a mouth which looks capable of devouring her fragile white-throated proprietor whole, mammoth hands and feet, and a plaid-draped figure, whose proportions strike terror into Reine's soul, as the kind-hearted creature insists upon folding the lonely girl to her capacious bosom; the "Frau Pfarrer" does not accompany her husband in what she considers his professional visits; she comes alone, brings her knitting, and while her fat, red fingers move with ceaseless, dexterous rapidity, she holds forth at the top of her voice, volubly; stopless; concerning her husband, her children, her servants, her expenses, economies (fertile theme) her friends, neighbours, enemies, christmas-trees, poultry, kaffee-klatsches, und so weiter, until Reine's bewildered brain, is a sort of colourless kaleidoscope, in which all these thrilling subjects elbow and jostle each other in hopeless confusion, while she vaguely wonders, why her reverend pastor has elected to enliven his solitude after this incomprehensible fashion.

Meanwhile De Ferrières is rushing as fast as steam can carry him, through his beloved France to Avignon, where Madame de St. Cyr, his sister, lives, whose sympathies he is bent upon

enlisting in Reine's behalf. He knows—none better—the strength of that bond between father and child which death has so cruelly sundered; he is well aware that no mere friendship can ever adequately fill the place, which Challoner's death has left vacant in Reine's life; but he feels persuaded that womanly sympathy and congenial companionship may go far towards rendering that life less desolate; he feels moreover very strongly that unless he can induce his little *protégée* to place herself under some unimpeachable, well-recognized feminine protection, he will be compelled, in her own interests to resign his position as vice-guardian and adviser-in-chief, at once; a disagreeable eventuality he is most anxious to avert; "if only Germaine will be reasonable;" he thinks as the train flies along through the rich, fertile country, and he nears his journey's end; "but it is so difficult to count even upon the best and most sensible of that emotional sex! However one ought not to have served an apprenticeship to diplomacy for nothing."

Madame de St. Cyr is too well acquainted with her brother's erratic habits to feel any surprise when he suddenly makes his appearance, just as she is preparing to sit down to a solitary second breakfast, about noon.

"Ah! my brother, welcome a thousand times; I imagined thee still vegetating in Baden; but it must be getting chill and dreary *là-bas* just now," she says, tendering first one cheek and then the other, on which De Ferrières deposits a zephyr-like kiss, as though he were suspicious that the pale rose bloom was not nature's own. "Lemaître, another *couvert*, and a bottle of '70 for Monsieur le Vicomte," she adds, to an imposing personage who looks like a retired Legitimist statesman.

Madame de St. Cyr resembles her brother as much as it is possible for man and woman to resemble each other; there are the same clear-cut features, the same air of distinction; only her hair is of silvery whiteness and of beautiful soft floss silk-like texture, framing the face in a succession of carefully arranged little curls almost as bewitching as Reine's own; every detail of her dress is studied and well-chosen, with that natural instinct to make the most of her charms, which never deserts a true-born frenchwoman, until the grave closes over the mortal form she has cherished and preserved so tenderly; in the sister's face is wanting that bright geniality which in the brother's is so attractive—that look which seems to say, "I have tasted of life and in the main have found it very good;" there are

hard lines round Madame de St. Cyr's lips when in repose, and the eyes still large and lustrous are cold in expression, for the warm current of her sympathies has been chilled effectually by twenty years of an unhappy marriage; and when at length a discriminating bullet in the Franco-German war lodged itself in Monsieur de St. Cyr's brain, it was too late for the icicles to thaw, which had grown chronic in long years of unkindness and neglect; indeed of this gallant officer, from a matrimonial point of view, it may be said, "Nothing in life became him like the leaving of it."

"You will stay with me now, I hope, Tristan, for a few weeks," his sister says, graciously, as breakfast proceeds; "the shooting has been kept strictly for you; they tell me the birds are numerous."

"Thank you, Germaine. You are very good, and nothing would give me greater pleasure than to remain with you—but—affairs recall me to Baden at once, and I am afraid the birds must wait a little longer," returns the Vicomte, conscious of a most unusual sensation of embarrassment.

"That is very much to be regretted; but I shall hope that your . . . . affairs" (with a scarcely perceptible hesitation) "will speedily arrange themselves, and that you will return later:"

says Madame de St. Cyr, who, though puzzled as to the possible motive of this flying visit, is discretion itself, and has learnt early in life the useful lesson, that a wise woman never asks questions.

"The reason which recalls me to Baden and the subject upon which I came to consult you, are one and the same," he replies, poising a most savoury morsel of *sole à la Normande* on his fork and contemplating it affectionately as he speaks; for Madame de St. Cyr, though a little *dévote*, sees no reason why the good things temporal and spiritual of this life should not, when practicable, be united, and the artist who presides over the kitchen at the *château* is one whom the critical Jules himself would welcome as a man and a brother.

If it were possible for the airy, self-possessed De Ferrières to feel nervous and uncomfortable, he certainly does so now, as he begins to plead Reine's cause to his sister, of whose sympathy and co-operation he does not feel by any means assured; perhaps the secret knowledge that at the bottom of his heart—although he has vowed to maintain a strictly neutral, paternal attitude, until Treherne's return—he is not so entirely disinterested in the matter as he tries to believe, may account for his trepidation.

Madame de St. Cyr listens to the story with attention, which fact does not, however, prevent her making a very excellent repast; she is really interested and not a little diverted; she has seen her brother in many *rôles*, but this new one, of professor of the convenances, of champion and self-constituted guardian of orphaned innocence, seems to her the most comical of all.

"It is very sad, Tristan, it makes one suffer to hear of such unhappiness, but what would you have *me* do?" she says, rather lukewarmly, with an emphasis on the pronoun, as she ends. It is such a difficult task to inoculate another with the enthusiasm which fires one's own brain!

"I will tell you," says De Ferrières, returning manfully to the assault; "I had a great regard for the father, I should look upon it as a personal kindness if you would interest yourself a little in the daughter; you must be dull enough here—will you invite her to stay with you for a few weeks? I will undertake to predict that you will not repent that charitable action when you know Mademoiselle Challoner—will you write to her? You see Germaine, a man's interest in a woman, however patriarchal he may be, is always open to misconception; *enfin!* will you write to her? Women know or should know the best way to

console each other;" from which it will be seen that there are points in the feminine character, upon which the Vicomte with all his experience, *may* be at fault.

"The young lady however has naturally some relatives—some friends?" says his sister interrogatively.

"Oh! without doubt, in England, both: but as she has nearly always lived abroad, she has not had much intercourse with either: *du reste*," he adds slily, "all Miss Challoner's sympathies are french; her mother was a frenchwoman—a De Noé—you know Germaine, the Normandy De Noes"—Madame de St. Cyr looks comforted —"she has no great predilection for England—it is connected in her mind with a most melancholy—I may say tragical—episode in her existence; it is conceivable that just now, after this recent calamity, she should feel more than ever disinclined to return there, especially with the prospect of a dreary winter before her; and *mon Dieu!* my sister, you have no idea, happily, what those terrible english winters are."

"Yet it appears to me that all this notwithstanding, the proper course for a young girl circumstanced as you represent, is to accept the

protection of her relatives, whether quite agreeable to her or not," she answers a little severely: "a french girl would see the necessity at once, and you tell me Mademoiselle—how then do you call her? well! *n'importe*—has been brought up according to our french ideas—if she were altogether english of course"—with an almost imperceptible, scrupulously lady-like shrug of her shapely shoulders—"one would easily comprehend these emancipated notions."

"You are undoubtedly right; I entirely agree with you," asserts the wily Vicomte readily; though secretly annoyed at his sister's inability to see the matter from his point of view: "indeed,"—(with a slight effort of the imagination), "I said very much the same thing to Mademoiselle myself—but there are certain circumstances in this case, which render it a little more difficult of arrangement than such cases usually are. The only near relative of my friend Challoner is an english priest of extreme views, with whom he had naturally very little in common; the wife of this gentleman from all I gather, appears to be one of those cold, formal, impassive Englishwomen, whom my warm-hearted little protégée would find to the last degree unsympathetic—taking all these little drawbacks

into consideration, Challoner, passing over his cousin entirely, has appointed as his daughter's guardian, a young man of six or eight and twenty, a late ward of his own, who was brought up with Mademoiselle Challoner as a brother, and whom my friend certainly loved as a son."

"What a very extraordinary idea!"

"Most extraordinary!" agrees her brother, once more, diplomatically; "and I interpret this curious act of Challoner's thus:—I think he desired nothing so much as the marriage of these young people—that in the event of his not living to see this wish fulfilled, he determined to smooth the way for its accomplishment by every means in his power, and by appointing young Treherne his child's guardian, to intimate to him as delicately as possible, the direction in which his hopes lay."

"And the young man—how is he called—but never mind; those english names are always impossible; where is he?"

"Trèshairne," returns De Ferrières, with his best accent, for his sister's enlightenment; "that is the most embarrassing part of the affair; he is away in South America, and the sealed packet left for him by Challoner cannot naturally be

opened until his return; the will, however, established clearly enough that he, not the cousin, is appointed guardian and sole trustee; had Challoner so willed it, his daughter would have gone to England just as she would have gone barefooted to Siberia in obedience to a wish of his; he has thought well to use no compulsion, and she has every right to choose her own life, seeing that in a few months she will be of age."

"Do you think the young man has any idea of the intentions of his friend? Has the young lady other than a sisterly affection for him—or would it be purely a *mariage de convenance* on her side?"

"Of all that, my dear Germaine, I can tell you absolutely nothing; of Treherne himself I have not seen very much, and it is not a subject I should be likely to discuss with Miss Challoner."

Madame de St. Cyr reflects for a few moments in silence; on the whole her experiences have not been of a nature to awaken in her a strong belief in the disinterestedness and straightforwardness of humanity generally; she leans across the table, taps her brother playfully on the arm with her fan, and says, with her sweetest smile, "Say then, *mon ami*, you are

quite sure everything is—exactly as you have stated it?"

He flushes angrily for an instant, but recovers himself immediately, remembering that if he wishes to gain his point it is not politic to "let angry passions rise;" he laughs a little as he replies reprovingly, "you are always so suspicious, Germaine; it is all exactly as I tell you, *parole d'honneur; ciel!* do you suppose if it were otherwise, that I should ask you—my sister—to interest yourself in the matter?"

"Ah! in this age of general *bouleversement*, one never feels quite sure of anything," she sighs, apologetically.

"For Miss Challoner," continues the Vicomte emphatically, "I have the deepest respect and regard, of which she is in every way more than worthy; that is the reason that I am so anxious, in her friendless condition, to shield her from misrepresentation at the hands of a censorious world, of whose evil side, she is as ignorant as an infant."

"I make you my compliments, Tristan; you have turned over quite a new leaf," says Madame de St. Cyr, nodding her head with a pretty little mock air of congratulation; she is annoyed with herself for the betrayal of her unfounded suspicions and cannot resist venting her irri-

tation after this harmless fashion, upon the innocent author of her discomfiture.

"Not at all—pardon me if I say that you, like most women, make the mistake of supposing that a man must of necessity be all saint or all sinner, instead of a practical combination of the two—as he in fact generally is. Well! if you are not disposed to make Miss Challoner's acquaintance, which would, I am convinced, prove a source of pleasure to yourself, no less than a kindness to her—can you and will you give me your assistance in the endeavour to find her a duenna—a *dame de compagnie*, or whatever is the correct term for that great resource of feminine incapacity; since she cannot in common charity be left quite alone, *pauvre enfant.*"

"Softly! softly! have I refused to receive Miss Challoner—on the contrary, I will do so with pleasure, for when did I ever deny you anything, my brother? *voyons!* I will write a note to Miss Challoner, and if I succeed in persuading her to visit me, will you come here to help to entertain her?"

"With the greatest pleasure in the world," he responds, with alacrity; "and I am quite sure that before she has been domiciled here twenty-four hours, you will both call down blessings on my venerable head for having brought you

together — thank you, Germaine, a thousand times," and he possesses himself of one of her jewelled, patrician hands, and in the excess of his gratitude, kisses it gallantly; for he is a curious, quixotic individual, and carries his peculiarities to the point of being scrupulously polite, even to his own immediate kith and kin.

"My brother," says Madame de St. Cyr gently but with intention, "is the old wound healed at last? it seems to me that it must be."

"Ah! but long ago—long ago—you know very well," he returns hastily with a truly masculine dread of being convicted of sentiment, "but do you know," he adds rather obscurely, "Miss Challoner is sometimes so like her in face and manner, though in character very different: she at least is a creature upon whom I think one might pin one's faith, if upon anything on earth."

"My poor Tristan! I fear you are indeed in a very enfeebled condition."

"Oh! no, at fifty one is too old to waste one's time crying for the moon."

"Ah! what history do you relate to me there? Too old! ridiculous! are you not a thousand times more attractive to women than these vain mannerless young men, the production of this detestable radical age, when everything seems

upside down? Have they your style, your air, your distinction, your information, those others? Tristan," she lays a small white hand persuasively upon his sleeve, "if you love this young girl, as I suspect, why do you not marry her, always supposing of course that no engagement exists between herself and the young Englishman; then indeed she will be welcome, most welcome, to me as a sister; seriously it is more than time that you were *rangé*; in a few years, life will no longer afford you the enjoyment it does now, and in the meantime our ancient race and name are dying out."

"You are very good, Germaine," says De Ferrières quietly; "but you arrive at conclusions a little too quickly, and you lose sight of the important fact, that to compacts of this nature the consent of two parties is necessary. I believe I am old enough to be Mademoiselle Reine's grandfather, though I have never had the moral courage to work out the calculation."

"What does that signify—such marriages are made every day and are often the happiest; besides you are in many ways an exceptional man—oh! I do not say so to flatter you, believe me; you have preserved your freshness of feeling and thought, to a marvellous degree; you will never be *blasé* if you live to be ninety; per-

sonally, I assure you, you might pass for five-and-thirty; one sees too, that it is all genuine," adds Madame de St. Cyr with a regretful sigh and a glance at her own well-arranged figure in the glass; "which is just as it should be; a made-up man is a most contemptible creature."

"Ah! a good digestion is certainly the best gift of the gods," laughs her brother.

"Tell me," she resumes presently—"tell me truly if you have reason to think that this young Englishman is attached to Mademoiselle Challoner."

"I do not know—he is one of those inscrutable Englishmen whom it takes one a lifetime to read."

"And who are not worth the trouble in the end," returns Madame de St. Cyr, who has little love for and still less knowledge of "perfidious Albion" and her sons; "I never met one of his countrymen who would have inspired me with a warmer feeling, than the stone effigy on the tomb of my ancestors."

"This young man is also rather in the statuesque line," replies De Ferrières smiling; "nevertheless in his own style he is exceedingly handsome—he is perhaps twenty-eight. Mademoiselle Reine is young, charming, unhappy, and they have been brought up together from their cradles;

have we not here all the elements of a pretty little romance?"

"Is he a man of position, of talent?" asks his sister looking at the practical side of the question.

"He is a barrister and is said to have brains, though they are by no means a necessary element in love's young dream."

"Then your regard for this young lady is purely disinterested?"

"Purely—does that seem to you so extraordinary?"

"The situation is I think a little novel," she says smiling; "but have you never reflected that this very solicitude on your part may defeat its own object and furnish an uncharitable world with a pretext for misjudging Mademoiselle Challoner?"

"You are quite right, my sister, you were always so clear-sighted," returns the Vicomte wisely, "I have thought of that too, and it is one potent reason why I beg you to take my little friend under the shadow of your wing, where I know no breath of calumny can ever reach her."

At this diplomatic speech Madame de St. Cyr surrenders completely, and as De Ferrières wishes her good-by, she assures him graciously that Reine shall be cordially welcome—for his sake.

CHAPTER V.

Gloomy and black are the cypress trees,
Drearily waileth the chill night breeze.
The long grass waveth, the tombs are white,
And the black clouds flit o'er the chill moonlight.

ADELAIDE PROCTER.

IT is evening when De Ferrières, travelling as quickly as the anti-slaughter, sober-minded continental system will allow, arrives in his old quarters at the pleasant "Cour de Bade," where he dines hastily and starts to walk to the *châlet*.

There is a crisp, frosty feeling in the air which tells of coming winter; innumerable stars twinkle merrily in the deep blue heavens; the chill, cold moonlight catches at the waving pine tops and glimmers fitfully through the stout branches of the tall elms in the Allée, silvering the crests of the tiny wavelets in the noisy rivulet, as it dances and frolics along, swollen by the autumn rains into quite a respectable stream; Baden thus, in her repose with her pretty villas and quaint toy châlets slumbering in the long pine shadows, is lovelier far than in the sunniest bright-

ness of her gayest noontide; and so thinks the Vicomte as he walks briskly along the silent street, poisoning the sweet air with a most excellent cigar, reflecting pleasantly upon his approaching interview with Reine.

At the corner of the bridge stands Jules bareheaded, scanning the road eagerly, to the right and left; De Ferrières coming out of the shadow notices the anxious, expectant look on the man's face and inquires hurriedly if anything is wrong.

"Ah! but Monsieur le Vicomte I am glad to see you of return," cries Jules with a sigh of relief; "nothing is wrong I hope, but I wait for Mademoiselle, I wait since a long time."

"Mademoiselle! She is out alone—at this hour?"

"Yes, Monsieur; late in the afternoon Mademoiselle, who has been very restless all day, *pauvre chère petite*, went out and has not yet returned; and what I find curious is, that the two dogs are shut up in the salon; Jean-Jacques he lies quietly at the window listening; but Coquin, he is no philosopher, he makes a *vacarme* to drive one mad!"

"I will try to find Mademoiselle," says De Ferrières, after a moment's reflection. "You have no idea which direction she took?"

"No, Monsieur," responds Jules lugubriously. "The poor little angel would eat nothing, absolutely nothing—though I prepared myself a little *merlan au gratin*, a *côtelette sauce tomate*, which no saint, even on Friday, could have resisted; she wandered about Monsieur's study crying over his books, his papers, so that it almost broke one's heart to listen; presently she went into the garden and I said to Therèse, *Dieu merci!* Mademoiselle goes at last to distract herself a little and take the air; but which way she went I cannot say."

"Perhaps to the english curé's?"

"I do not think so, for Madame—the curé's wife—was here already this morning," says Jules simply, "and Mademoiselle seemed much exhausted after her visit; *Mon Dieu, Mon Dieu!* but they have tongues *ces Allemandes* and voices! *parbleu!* to crack one's ears!"

"I see no cause for alarm; I shall be back soon; in the meantime, my good Jules, make a good fire in the *salon;* Mademoiselle will be perished this cold night," and De Ferrières strides off quickly up the avenue.

He turns at the top to the left, up the hill in the direction of the cemetery; in a few minutes he is at the gate; he makes his way to the place

where his friend lies buried; at the newly-made grave, surrounded by marble, flower-decked crosses, pillars with sad encircling *immortelles* and all the melancholy emblems of death, a black-robed figure kneels; her hat has fallen off, her face is buried in her hands, for she is crying bitterly, and a stray gleam of moonlight catching at the soft brown curls proves to the Vicomte conclusively that his instincts have not misled him.

"My poor child, is this how you have kept your promises to me?" he says very gently, as he raises her; she is numbed with cold and totters as she tries to stand; she expresses no surprise at his sudden appearance, she has not even started at the sound of his voice; only when he essays to draw her away, she resists feebly and cries with piteous incoherence:—

"Let me stay—why did you come, you must know I cannot live away from him!"

De Ferrières has never felt so distressed, so full of pity for any human creature; mentally he wishes Treherne at some french equivalent for Jericho, that he himself might be free to take this forlorn child to his heart and cherish her; but he is not free, and he seeks refuge from the dangerous feelings which the spectacle of her

desolation awakens in him, in a few curt matter-of-fact words, which act as a salutary tonic upon her over-strained nerves.

"Mademoiselle, this proceeding is to the last degree unwise; you will catch your death of cold; Jules is in a state of the greatest anxiety about you; you should remember it is no longer summer; the evenings are damp and treacherous; —how long have you been here?"

"I do not know," she says, standing before him among the graves, a lovely image of despair, and stooping to take one of the blossoms she has lately laid on the cruel ground which hides her father from her, adds shyly, "How did you know I was here?"

"That was not difficult to divine—come."

He draws her hand through his arm and leads her on to the gravel path, where he has noticed a bench, as he came along; she is weak and faint; she can scarcely walk; Jasper's "Butterfly Reine" has died with the summer, like the rest of her bright-hued sisters; at the bench De Ferrières pauses that she may rest, for he has all a man's helpless dread of a fainting woman.

She sits down obediently; misery is an excellent cure for every species of feminine wilful-

ness, self-assertion, and that quality which men denominate in themselves determination and in woman, "having a will of her own."

"You think I am foolish—you are angry with me," says poor Reine in limp apology; "but if you only knew what a blank it is! *Père's* room —his chair empty—his desk with a letter half-finished—his books lying open as he left them! I catch myself listening for the sound of his footstep, it is so hard to realize he will never come back; memory seems to take a pleasure in torturing me: the songs he loved best are always in my head—but all this seems childish to you, I know."

"It seems not at all childish, and it is for this very reason that I urge you so strongly to leave Baden; when we have a sorrow to bear, which is irremediable, believe me, it is best to brace ourselves up to meet it at first: so that it may not master us."

"Other people's misfortunes are so easy to bear," she says not bitterly, but dejectedly as a plain statement of fact.

De Ferrières bites his lip. "It depends very much upon who the other people are——Come Mademoiselle, will you not? This cold air, thinly clad as you are, cannot be good for you,

and that poor Jules is suffering tortures of suspense."

They walk back slowly, almost in silence, for the Vicomte knows by the lagging, inelastic step, the pressure on his arm, that even this slight bodily exertion is a severe strain upon Reine; at the bridge Jules still stands sentinel, and as they emerge out of the darkness of the gardens into the bright moonlight and he becomes convinced that his "*pauvre ange*" stands once more in the flesh before him, he launches out, with the aid of many superlatives and much gesticulation, into a description of the disquieting agonies he has endured.

"Mademoiselle is very tired and hungry, and has done me the honour of inviting me to dinner," says the Vicomte, drawing a little upon his imagination to cut short Jules' tale of woe.

"*A la bonne heure!* it shall be served immediately," cries Monsieur Galette bustling off delightedly, and De Ferrières leads Reine into the *salon*, where a wood fire crackles cheerily in the white stove and makes a very good imitation of cheerful comfort, in the eyes of benighted foreigners who are unacquainted with the delights of a genuine, english, blazing, wasteful fire.

The Vicomte is of opinion that it is high time some one assumed supreme command in this disorganized establishment; he deposits Reine, exhausted and ghost-like in an easy chair, and summoning Mademoiselle Célestine, desires her to remove her young mistress' hat and cloak, and to bring dry shoes for the two small feet he has deposited on a footstool close to the stove; he next consigns the too-demonstrative Coquin to his own private and particular habitation—much to that intelligent animal's indignation, who regards Reine's lap as his own freehold property—insists that a small glass of "Chartreuse" shall be swallowed, and arranges everything as naturally and composedly as though he had been accustomed to play paterfamilias all his life.

Suddenly he appears before the astonished Therèse in the kitchen where she is engaged upon an appetizing compound, under the critical eye of her husband.

"Do not give yourselves any trouble about me," says De Ferrières pleasantly, "I have already dined; I permitted myself a little fiction in the hope of inducing Mademoiselle to eat; solitude is not precisely the sort of tonic which gives one an appetite."

"Truly no—Monsieur is right—but do not

speak of trouble—we are enchanted to be at the service of Monsieur, who will at any rate I hope taste this little *potage à la Bisque;* our dear master," adds Jules stirring the savoury *chef-d'œuvre* mournfully, "used to say to me, in his pleasant way, 'there is no better Bisque than yours in all Paris, Jules, not at Bignon's even, nowhere.'"

"Bisque! if I have a weakness it is Bisque—human nature cannot resist it," cries the Vicomte good-naturedly. "Let us eat in the *salon* Jules, so that Mademoiselle, who is now warm, need not move into a cold room; and will you bring a bottle of some good sound french wine—a good Burgundy *par exemple;* that is what Mademoiselle requires—none of these native sauer-kraut vintages."

"Ah! Monsieur may rest tranquil; I would not offer him or Mademoiselle the liquid these unhappy creatures are condemned to drink," returns Jules magnificently; "and now that I have the honour to address Monsieur alone may I beg him to remark the change in Mademoiselle—to assure him that unless she leaves this place where she has been so unhappy, she will die of *ennui,* solitude and grief."

"At twenty no one dies of any of those three things, my good Jules, believe me, but nevertheless I am using all my powers of persuasion to induce Mademoiselle to leave Baden if only for a short time."

Jules' countenance expresses immense relief. "But where then, is the next question; a young lady so beautiful—Monsieur must himself see that she is of a charming beauty—" says the old man breaking off suddenly in the middle of his sentence, with the air of one who wishes to be assured he is not appraising his own property too highly.

"Certainly."

"*Natürlich,*" assents Therèse with unwary enthusiasm, but at the sound of her forbidden native tongue, the eagle glance of her lord flashes upon her and causes her to drop her fork into the fire, in a nervous tremor.

"Until Mr. Treherne's return nothing can be permanently arranged—in the meantime I hope to induce Mademoiselle, to visit my sister near Avignon: I come from there to-day."

"Avignon! our France—the south! then all will be well!" exclaims Jules ecstatically, who, in the exuberance of his patriotism, looks upon the air of his beloved country as the panacea for all

human ills. "Monsieur has indeed taken a load from my heart! Ah! the sleepless nights I have passed thinking of all these things; Therèse can tell you the same;" as indeed she could and likewise of the irritability by day and her own sufferings, consequent upon the many perplexities which distract the great brain of Monsieur Galette at this period.

"For how then with the best will in the world could I protect and guard Mademoiselle?" resumes Jules confidentially; "even now there is that german officer;" (his tone as he pronounces the detested adjective is a study)—"he comes everyday to inquire — to inform himself as to her health; I do not encourage him to enter, that is easily understood; but there will arrive a day when he will insist and then how should I refuse?"

"I do not think there is any necessity to garrison the citadel so strongly against this particular invader," says De Ferrières laughing; "Herr von Waldeck is a young man of position —a thorough gentleman and so on; it might perhaps distract Mademoiselle to make a little music with him."

"I do not trust any of that nation," says Jules emphatically; "it is a question upon which I

humbly beg to differ with Monsieur le Vicomte; when Mr. Treherne returns, affairs will no doubt soon arrange themselves," he adds with intention; "for although he is english" (with condescending magnanimity), "Monsieur Jaspaire has a good heart under that cold appearance — ah! I know him well! Once I was ill and Mademoiselle herself did not nurse me more tenderly than Monsieur Jaspaire!"

"Well! we must all do our best until he returns—afterwards—we shall see—Good-night Therèse."

"Goodnight, Monsieur — the saints will certainly reward Monsieur for all his goodness to the poor orphan," returns Therèse humidly, bobbing respectfully; the good creature is much given to drawing little bills on these celestial gentry who, it is to be hoped, duly honour them when presented.

Reine has dutifully eaten of the celebrated *potage* and other delicacies, has swallowed the Burgundy De Ferrières has prescribed—for his genial air of gentle authority is quite irresistible —and now lies back in her chair, reaping the reward of her obedience: Jules has piled wood in the stove, has served dèlicious black coffee and discreetly retired, mentally showering blessings

upon the head of his persuasive countryman.

De Ferrières draws a chair near Reine and says: "Mademoiselle, from this moment I appoint myself your physician in ordinary; my prescriptions have already worked wonders; perhaps that is because I eschew drugs and rely only upon nature's simplest chemicals — do you not feel an immense confidence in my skill developing itself in your mind? As for me I find the case one of absorbing interest; permit me to feel your pulse; one — two — three — not so bad — smile again, ah! that is well, continue to smile — if only I could attain the highest art in physic— to amuse the patient, while the malady cures itself!"

"But I have no malady."

"A patient is no judge of his own case; that is one of the first principles of medicine; but as I am happily untrammelled by any considerations of professional etiquette—I will admit that you have formed a correct diagnosis—mark the word —does it not inspire confidence?—of your own case—that is right, laugh away, with me, at me, as you will, only laugh. It is quite true you have no disease and all the drugs in the pharmacopœia are of no avail—am I not an honest

doctor, Mademoiselle? And for tractable patients I prescribe only pleasant things—but they must promise me implicit obedience. Will you grant me absolute control over your destiny for—I will be modest—say one calendar month?"

"That is rather a startling Mephistophelian sort of proposition, Vicomte?"

"Cruel! but this humble Mephisto does not ask for your soul; he only aspires to influence your actions for one short month—for your own good! you see he is quite an improvement on the old original."

"I think I may venture to agree to that harmless compact—there is my hand upon it."

"Then it is decreed that you betake yourself within eight days to the *Château St. Cyr*, near Avignon."

"Is it there that your sister lives?"

"Yes; in a most charming country."

"But she may not be willing to receive me."

"On the contrary, she wishes it."

"How can you possibly tell?"

"Because Germaine is one of the few people who say exactly what they mean, and I have been to ask her."

"You took that long, cold journey on my account?"

"I did indeed; are you not prepared to reward me for my toilsome pilgrimage by the most implicit obedience?"

"I shall never be able to reward you for half your kindness to me."

"Ah! but I was only joking of course; it is not even a journey! A little promenade, nothing more—and I wanted to see Germaine; *voyons;* when will you permit me to be your escort?"

"What will become of Jules and Therèse?"

"Leave them here to the enjoyment of their domestic felicity."

"And Jean-Jacques and Coquin?"

"Take them if you like—Germaine *raffoles* of dogs; she has a deer-hound who never leaves her, who is as big as a good-sized pony. Ah! I predict that you will find many points of sympathy—Germaine delights also in music—your music, Mademoiselle, of the chaotic Wagnerian Future; you will become great allies, I feel it prophetically; my sister is perhaps a little cold —a little stately at first—but where she loves, she loves very much; she has not had a happy life; Monsieur my brother-in-law was a gentleman upon whom the matrimonial chains of western civilization, sat uneasily."

"Since you have been away—and I was very

lonely those three days, believe me," Reine says simply, "I have been quite sure that all you said to me is true; I could never bear to remain here quite alone, and since your sister is you say so kind as to wish it, I will go with you to Avignon whenever it will be convenient to you to take me."

"Ah! now I make you my compliments—you are indeed a pattern patient: one after a doctor's own heart ready to accept his dictates as infallible! We will start to morrow, the next day or the next—just whenever you please—and now tell me; I am accustomed to go down there every autumn for a little shooting," (the Vicomte *à la chasse* is indeed a sight to behold!) "Germaine likes to see me and it is something to do. This year, would it please you best if I remained as usual, or would you prefer that I left you two ladies to your confidences undisturbed!"

"Can you ask? Of course I should like you to remain; I have an idea that I shall stand in awe of your sister; of you," with a hasty upward glance, "I am not one bit afraid."

"So I gather from the disregard you showed for my express injunctions in my absence—so let it be then, I will stay and slaughter" (a very

correct term) "the little birds," says De Ferrières well-pleased; for although he has put the question with an air of assumed indifference he has anxiously awaited Reine's reply, though its perfect straightforwardness goes to strengthen his conviction that she regards him in the light of an indulgent, old grandfather—and will ever so continue to regard him.

"I am also a convert to the watch-dog theory," Reine says presently; "you and my cousin it seems to me now, were both right—he at least partially—you, entirely; only my head is so stupid, it takes in new ideas very slowly; I have thought of some one who might perhaps consent to become my keeper; to whom the post might be an assistance; even a great blessing."

"But one will not be necessary now; for I give you fair warning that once safely lodged at St. Cyr we shall not allow our prisoner to escape."

"But afterwards when—when Jasper returns" (the Vicomte discreetly chooses this moment to pile more wood in the stove), "when I must be here to arrange matters, I shall require one—I cannot inflict myself upon your sister for ever; it is too good of her to be troubled with

me at all—I am bent upon securing a faithful and intelligent watch-dog."

"You say you have already thought of some discreet and endurable quadruped?"

It is the little birds' friend in the Tuileries gardens of whom Reine has thought, and she relates the story briefly to De Ferrières, who listens with interest, if a little sceptically.

"Beyond this you know nothing."

"Nothing—except her name and address."

The Vicomte carefully notes down both in his pocket-book; "I will make inquiries," he says prudently, "and let you know if the scheme is practicable."

"I am sure she is a good woman and of gentle birth; her manner was quite refined; I feel a sort of sympathy for her, as one does sometimes for people, at first sight."

"But to which it does not always do to trust without corroborative evidence; this is the golden age of shams and imitations from the celebrated, wooden nutmeg upwards; nothing is more often or more successfully imitated than honesty and respectability. I remember *apropos*, a little episode in my own career, which may serve to point a moral; it occurred many years ago 'in my salad days, when I was green in

judgment,' as you will readily believe, when you hear the story.

"Travelling in Russia I met a very distinguished young man for whom I experienced one of those sudden, magnetic sympathies, you describe; he enchanted me so much by his erudition, his wit, his knowledge of languages, his gentlemanly modest bearing, and harrowed up my feelings so effectually, by a heartrending history of hardship, misfortune and cruel injustice, told with much apparent reluctance, that I, in the fulness of my heart, invited him to accompany me back to Paris, where I promised to interest myself in procuring him employment; —work, he assured me—free scope for his talents —was his one desire—his sole object in life; he claimed kinship in high quarters (I see no reason to doubt the truth of this section of his narrative)—and hinted that intriguing jealousy had successfully cheated him out of a lucrative and exalted appointment—probably that of *coiffeur* in ordinary and groom of the powder-puff to His Majesty the Czar.

"I was so overcome with sympathetic distress at the misfortunes of this young Russian nobleman—I need not tell you he was a count with a dozen impossible names, that I pressed upon him

the loan of my pocket-book, which, after some slight demur he was good enough to accept, and gave him rendezvous in St. Petersburg, where I was going to see my father, then at the Embassy —a capital, I remembered afterwards, my new friend exhibited a marked disinclination to visit.

"I endeavoured to enlist my father's interest in the cause I had at heart, but he received my overtures in that cautious spirit of distrust which in the eyes of youthful ardour seems little short of brutal.

"'Take care, Tristan, my boy, what thou art about; the world is full of rogues in the guise of honest men, on the look-out for greenhorns like thee.'

"This was not reassuring—'but, my father,' I remonstrated indignantly, 'this gentleman is of excellent family—it is his misfortune to be poor —is that a reason why we should despise him, and suspect him of all sorts of atrocities?'

"My father shrugged his shoulders. 'If he is of excellent family,' he said cruelly, 'is that any reason why he should not be a rogue? *Pardieu!* if Diogenes had begun his search in these latitudes, his lantern would have exhausted all the oil mines in the country, before he found what he

wanted—but as thou wilt, my son, experience must be bought.'

"After this rebuff I was not disposed to confide to my parent, the fact that I had already advanced a considerable sum towards the purchase of that useful commodity.

"On the appointed day my magnetic friend met me and we travelled together to Paris; I will do him the justice to admit, that I never knew a more entertaining companion or found a tedious journey so short; I took him to my house, I gave him to eat of my salt—of my wine to drink—of my cigars—he was an excellent judge of cigars—to smoke; I introduced him to my literary friends, but somehow he seemed less enthusiastic than before, concerning his one desire—his sole object in life—work. *Enfin*, Mademoiselle, I loved him as a brother, I admired him as the wittiest, most versatile individual it had ever been my good fortune to encounter; and I have every reason to believe that he entertained for me an admiring, sympathetic friendship, fully equal to my own; for one day, being called somewhat suddenly away by important business in my absence, he left a line assuring me, he was too prostrate with emotion to risk a personal 'farewell,' and departed with a

heavy heart and a heavier portmanteau, for he carried away with him, as consolation, my jewel-case, my cash-box and many other valuable souvenirs; upon hurrying to my bankers in my anxiety to assure myself, that in the excess of his modesty, he had not neglected to provide himself with funds for travelling expenses, I further discovered that he had done me the honour to adopt my signature and handwriting as his own; since that affecting incident, Mademoiselle, I confess I have been sceptical regarding the value of sympathy at first sight."

"I am quite sure that Madame Roland does not possess the talent of your Russian friend," says Reine with a laugh.

"But he too I assure you had a perfectly angelic expression of countenance; *tenez*, he always reminded me of your poet Shelley; however, doubtless your *protégée* will prove a most estimable matron; you say she is old?"

"Quite, quite old, fifty at least," she returns innocently, at which De Ferrières smiles, as he runs mentally through the means at his disposal of testing the eligibility of this humble sheep-dog to guard this snow-white lamb; reflecting that like the excellent Lady Pinchbeck,

Olden she was—but had been very young;

certainly not always "quite, quite old, fifty at least:" then he takes leave of Reine and walks thoughtfully back to his hotel.

Two days later everything is arranged for Reine's departure; the Vicomte, who in his novel position has developed an immense regard for "the proprieties," decrees that Jules shall accompany the little party on the journey, returning when Reine shall be duly installed under his sister's roof. Célestine is in the seventh heaven of delight at the prospect of quitting this "*pays barbare;*" but Jules is dejected at the thought that he must return alone, and *pour comble d'horreur* (as he confides to Célestine's sympathetic ear), to a *tête-à-tête* with the ungrammatical Therèse—but—"*enfin* Mademoiselle's interests demand the sacrifice——" an expressive shrug finishes the sentence.

It is a beautiful October day; the russet brown woods are bathed in mellow sunshine, the lovely valley, lately a waving sea of maize and flax, is flooded with golden, autumn light; the sky is as blue as in the height of summer, fading, along the distant line of the Vosges, into delicate shades of pink and pearly grey: for the first time since her father's death, Reine wanders with

the dogs into the forest, where fallen leaves and masses of long pine-needles make a soft carpet on the paths; mounting the hill slowly, in sorrowful meditation she chooses, by chance, the road which leads to the little arbour, perched on the hill-side—the spot in which, it seems to her, she first learnt to suffer; she wakes up from a reverie to find herself standing almost on the threshold; she enters for a moment and sits down on the rustic seat; the whole scene returns to her most vividly; she almost fancies she sees Jasper leaning there, so stern and resolute, yet, for her, so tender: she recalls his voice, his words, his looks, his cruel verdict that they must part for ever; the sense of desolation overwhelms her in presence of these sad memories, and the poor child turns and flees quickly through the rustling woods.

On the high ground at the back of the Conversation House, Reine pauses; the band is playing in the great concert-room; she recognizes Schubert's music to "Rosamunde;" the sweet melody seems to soothe her troubled spirit, and she sits down on a bench, overshadowed by tall firs, to rest and listen, while Coquin darts down the slopes wildly in pursuit of phantom rabbits,

and the cultured Jean-Jacques lends an attentive ear to Schubert's harmonies.

The bench Reine occupies, is placed in a recess formed by a bend in the road; as the music ceases she becomes aware of a sound of clattering, clanging, laughing and much "ja-ja-ing," approaching rapidly in her direction; in another moment three variously-hued warriors appear round the curve, one of whom, in dark blue tunic, detaching himself from his companions, brings himself to a halt opposite Reine, with two white-gloved fingers glued to a velvet-banded cap, which sets off so much of his flaxen curls, as the iron finger of discipline allows him to retain, and becomes his handsome, sunburnt, smiling face, admirably.

It is von Waldeck; all the delight he experiences at this unexpected meeting, beams in his honest blue eyes, while he bends over the hand she extends to him in welcome, and his brother officers, after scraping and saluting sympathetically, go on their way, with envy raging in their well-padded breasts.

"Ah! *mein Fräulein,* how can I then tell you how much I have grieved over this terrible misfortune?" says Max very earnestly, and his own

eyes grow misty as he sees the tears gather in hers.

"I know it—I believe it," she returns tremulously; "but—I cannot speak of it—do not think me ungrateful if——"

"Of course not! *Ach!* I am a clumsy fellow but I—well—I have thought of you so much, and I could not meet you for the first time and not tell you something of all this," he explains, tugging in much perplexity at his moustache; "you would have thought me such an unfeeling fellow."

Reine smiles and says, "That I should never think you;" and there follows a pause during which the Herr Lieutenant contemplates the alteration sorrow has already made in the pale, sad young face, he remembers so blithe and bonny.

"I have been into the woods," says Reine breaking the silence; "and I sat down here to listen to the band—they played 'Rosamunde' just before you came."

"So-o—it is charming music—now they play 'Dichter und Bauer,' that is also pretty: in the woods it is now damp and melancholy, *nicht wahr, Fräulein.*"

"A little—but I love the woods—your ger-

man woods, at all seasons" (how he wishes she could be induced to accept a reversionary interest in the noble forests of his uncle, the Herr Baron); "to-day I went to say good-bye to them, for to-morrow I leave Baden."

Von Waldeck's face falls, and his hopes go with a rush down to zero.

"To-morrow! you go back to England—yes?"

"Oh! no! I am going to stay with the Vicomte de Ferrières' sister, near Avignon."

"So—but you will return sometimes to Baden, will you not, *Fräulein?*" he inquires wistfully.

"Yes—I have taken the *châlet* for the winter months;" she answers with a quaint little air of business which amuses him; "Jules and his wife remain in possession."

"That is good news—and shall you return soon?"

"That depends upon the impression my hostess and myself make upon each other respectively," she answers, smiling, "for we have never met, and it is quite possible war may be declared within the first four-and-twenty hours, in which case I shall retreat strategically across the frontier."

"But no, *Fräulein*, there will be no occasion for any strategical manœuvres—I cannot imagine

any one quarrelling with you," says Max sentimentally.

"Nor I," she responds naïvely; "I am sure I should prove a very chicken-hearted, unexciting antagonist; I never can understand why people are so angry if they cannot induce others to think exactly as they do; it seems to me so childish not to know that different brains must produce different thoughts; we do not quarrel with each other because our faces are not made all after the same pattern—but," with a sigh, "perhaps I have been a little spoilt. I shall however be put now to a crucial test, alone in a country-house, with one old lady; though the Vicomte has charitably consented to enliven our solitude."

"Ah!" says Max with a jealous pang.

"Madame de St. Cyr, however, is I hear very musical, Herr Lieutenant," resumes Reine unconscious of his sufferings; "although she is french, her brother tells me she loves our Wagner, so that on that point at least we shall agree."

"Then you will not fail to practise diligently *Fräulein* I am sure: I have some studies of Rheinberger's and one or two other things I think you would like if you will allow me to send them to you," says von Waldeck, who is very

anxious to be made acquainted with Reine's exact destination.

The unsuspecting little mouse walks headlong into the trap he has set for her—she writes the address on a leaf of her pocket-book, which he hides away carefully in the recesses of his uniform.

"I shall permit myself also to send you an accompaniment to a *concerto* of Brahm's which I have been studying lately—will you have the goodness to look over it a little, and perhaps when you return you will allow me the pleasure of playing it with you?"

It is curious the capacity for diplomacy which the presence of "little god Cupid" develops even in the most simple, straightforward brain. Von Waldeck, who as a rule is as incapable of *finesse*, as innocent of artifice, as any child, is inspired by the pain of approaching separation, to improvise endless excuses, for keeping himself in the remembrance of the lady of his love.

"I will certainly look it over a little," says Reine, "as you are kind enough to put it; it is sure to be very difficult and will I daresay cost me hours of hard practice, at the end of which I shall probably play it much worse than you would at first sight; ah! Herr Lieutenant, what would I

give for your talent? your facility? You can never be dull, or unhappy, or lonely with your violin!"

"Yet, *Fräulein*, there are moments—even many, when I am both," he says earnestly, while his handsome bronzed face puts on a deeper tint of red; "there are times when to me my violin seems all out of tune—perhaps because I am inconstant to my old friend and long for other companionship than his."

De Ferrières' warning recurs to Reine with the conviction that he is right: she feels that von Waldeck's last words are a prelude to much that she must inevitably hear if she remains where she is: to which she can neither listen nor reply without pain; in the present unstrung state of her nerves a scene of any kind is more than she dare trust herself to bear; with a hasty, upward glance of entreaty—which he, in his blissful ignorance of her real feelings, interprets merely as a gentle reproach that he should choose this time to speak—she rises rather abruptly and holding out her hand says nervously, "Good-bye, Herr Lieutenant, it gets dark and damp so early now; I think I will go home."

"You permit me to accompany you to the bridge, *Fräulein?*" he says penitently.

"I would rather you did not—I mean—do not

think me ungracious," she stammers, seeing that he looks pained; the fact being that the Reverend Hinton's homilies have rendered her morbidly sensitive, on the question of the proprieties.

"As you wish, of course."

"Once more then, 'good-bye.'"

"*Auf wiedersehen—mein Fräulein*—not good-bye, I hope—it is one degree less sad."

"*Auf wiedersehen*," she repeats, and turns down the steep path, saddened; for in parting from him, it seems to her, that she is severing another link, in the calm peaceful life, remembrance makes so dear to her.

Von Waldeck stands where she has left him, watching the slight, graceful, black figure as it crosses the Promenade, where Coquin encounters a four-footed acquaintance, whose politics or sentiments are evidently not in accordance with his own, for after a brief parley he flies at him with the unreasoning vehemence of a modern Hibernian patriot; so that Reine is compelled to return to the scene of battle and inflict summary chastisement, with her parasol, upon the aggressor; then she disappears behind the "Kiosk," driving Coquin, bristling and unrepentant before her; and Max turns his back upon the town, and through the chill, October evening walks slowly

along the road to Oos, humming as he goes, the refrain of an old Volkslied—

Ade—ade—scheiden und meiden thut Weh.

At Oos he takes the train, and his companions see him no more that night; but an unhappy, young, newly-fledged warrior, from whom the exacting Fatherland demands service before the sun rises on the morrow, and who has the misfortune to occupy rooms next to his, is much exercised in spirit by the melancholy wailing of Max's violin far into the watches of the night.

But neither music nor much hard work avail to comfort this love-sick young man; Reine's wistful grey eyes look at him between the rows of clumsy raw recruits, it is his business to drill into shape—confuse and make nonsense of his most telling sentences when the trying duty, known as "Instruction," devolves upon him; yet, he is not unhappy, for hope is still his, and he looks forward to the day when she will return to Baden, when time shall have taken away the first bitterness of her grief and he shall be free to tell her of his love—to win her if the gods are good to him.

Surely no little maiden with two loyal hearts at her feet was ever so desolate as Reine; perhaps the rare gift of constancy is, after all, not an unmixed blessing to woman.

CHAPTER VI.

A gen'rous friendship no cold medium knows.

POPE.

Low, low breathe and blow,
Wind of the western sea!
Over the rolling waters go,
Come from the dying moon and blow,
Blow him again to me.

TENNYSON.

THE next morning Reine starts upon her travels; little "Chules" clings to her skirts and beseeches his dear Mademoiselle—for whom he entertains an admiring affection second only to that of his august parent—not to depart and leave him; receiving a reprimand at head-quarters for this outburst of selfishness, he makes a manly effort to subdue his emotion, and petitions only for her speedy return. Reine takes the little fellow in her arms and kisses him and whispers consolingly: "See then, *petit chou*, don't cry, and I will bring thee the largest *sucre de pomme* Avignon can produce"—but even this magnificent bribe is powerless at this cruel moment, and he is carried away, overcome by his feelings, in his mother's arms.

Therèse, who is likewise of an emotional nature, lets loose tearful floods, in the privacy of her own apartment, from whence, with much indistinct invocation of the saints she watches the departure of her friend and champion; reflecting with a heavy heart, that the severe marital eye will now have ample leisure to seek out and adjudicate upon her many peccadilloes.

Jean-Jacques and Coquin are privileged by special invitation to journey southwards with their mistress, and as a result of the combined influence of De Ferrières' persuasive eloquence and the discriminating application of the silver key, are permitted by the incorruptible officials of the Fatherland, to repose serenely upon the Grand Ducal red velvet—*erste classe*.

The journey is long, and the Vicomte remembering all Reine has gone through of late, decides to break it half way: he is so thoughtful, so full of unobstrusive kindness, so unsparing of trouble, that Reine is sorry when the run through sunny France is ended, and the peaceful sensation of general well-being which has taken possession of her, since she quitted the scene of her sorrow, is exchanged for one of secret misgiving, regarding her approaching interview with Madame de St. Cyr.

A carriage with two sturdy over-fed horses and coachman to match waits for the travellers at the station; half an hour's drive brings them to the *château*, where, on the upper terrace, Madame de St. Cyr, tall and stately—at first sight Reine thinks rather alarming—accompanied by a beautiful fawn-coloured deerhound, is ready to receive them.

"Ah! Germainė! thou art well? but I need not ask;" says De Ferrières, jumping out briskly and saluting his sister affectionately but carefully upon each cheek; "this is Mademoiselle Challoner, of whom I have told you so much."

"You are welcome, dear child, most welcome," says the old lady cordially, smiling a smile which chases away the austere expression of her face entirely, before which Reine's doubts and trepidation vanish into thinnest air.

The girl in her turn is kissed after the pretty french fashion; De Ferrières reflects as he contemplates the process that in this instance at least no circumspection is required; though indeed the roses which bloom just now in his little friend's cheeks are of the faintest "maiden's blush" variety.

Reine is won on the spot by this friendly, kindly greeting, and conceives forthwith one of

those sudden, undying friendships for her genial hostess, for which the feminine heart is specially remarkable.

"Madame is too kind—too amiable for me—a stranger," she murmurs in her pretty french, "and I do not know how to apologize for arriving with such a retinue; but Jules will return immediately, and Monsieur your brother has been trying to persuade me you really wished the dogs to come."

"But certainly; without going quite so far as the cynic who said the more he saw of men, the more he admired dogs—I have a great predilection for the four-footed race; your old servant, of whom I have also heard from Tristan, is welcome too, and will I trust rest here a day or two, before he resumes his journey;" a gracious announcement, which renders Monsieur Galette the lady's devoted slave for ever—to which he responds by one of his most finished bows.

The day is warm, and they linger talking on the terrace; the dogs furnish a fertile theme of conversation, the ladies comparing notes as to their respective beauties, excellences and accomplishments; Reine duly admires the great deerhound; Madame de St. Cyr is moved to enthusiasm by the perfections of Jean-Jacques—

Coquin she calls "a little droll." Ever since his arrival the "little droll" has been bristling with indignation at the presence of the deerhound, longing to attack so worthy and magnificent a foe; at length he frees himself from Reine's arms and rushes headlong into the jaws of danger; the great hound receives his onslaught with contemptuous indifference, then, as the attack is renewed, turns a sly, leery eye upon the valiant little animal, and gives him one nip with his cruel, wolfish teeth which sends him howling dismally, back to his mistress.

"But *fi donc!* Bayard; are these thy manners to thy guests," says Madame de St. Cyr, pulling the delinquent's ear with no very gentle hand.

"Coquin will never learn that might is right in this life," says De Ferrières laughing; "he will get his little restless spirit snuffed out suddenly some fine day as a penalty for his fatuity."

"Shall we walk to the end of the terrace and watch the sun set, or would you prefer resting after your journey?" inquires Madame of Reine.

"Mademoiselle in her heart is—like a true Englishwoman—longing for a cup of tea," says the Vicomte.

"But Mademoiselle has no resemblance to an Englishwoman—*voyons:*" returns his sister as

though she felt an apology necessary; for indeed Madame de St. Cyr's ideal daughter of Albion is a gaunt, angular, woodeny personage with a bottle-green veil, Murray's Handbook, and a pair of blue spectacles.

"I like to think I belong to both countries," says Reine gracefully; "my mother was of your nation, Madame; but, I am considered so like my father" (with a little painful effort) "that I am sure—at least I hope, I look like an english girl too."

"You may be quite tranquil on that score,' says De Ferrières, to whom has been vouchsafed more ample opportunity of studying our animated insular loveliness.

"In my appreciation of tea I am also english," says Madame, "we will look at the sunset over the woods for a few minutes, and Tristan, will you tell Lemaître to serve tea immediately?"

"Your dog is named Bayard—is that after your brother?" queries Reine, smiling.

"Mademoiselle," says De Ferrières, who has rejoined them, "I protest against being made the victim of your satire—your malice."

"Is Tristan then a Bayard in your eyes?" inquires Madame, looking into the girl's face, well-pleased and thinking that a little project she has

very much at heart, may possibly admit of fulfilment after all.

"*Père* and I used to call your brother so, sometimes; and indeed was it not the part of a good, true knight to succour distressed and friendless maidens?"

"*Ma foi!* Mademoiselle, I can conceive that that part of a good knight's duty was not very onerous!"

"Lately indeed I have had occasion to know how well the name is bestowed," says Reine turning to her hostess, with sweet seriousness.

"Mademoiselle, I must again protest—such uncompromising flattery is good for no man."

"Do not complain, my brother; it is a great thing to be a hero—to be believed in by some one, nothing is so rare in this callous age of scepticism."

"It is delightful I admit, but the rectitude of my soul rebels against unmerited praise; I have no claim to be a Bayard, for indeed I am *not* by any means *sans peur;* I could furnish you with a catalogue as long as Leporello's, of things that move me to alarm and suggest the cowardly expedient of instant flight; for example—a scolding woman, matrimony, an opera of Wagner's—(par-

don me that confession), a Sunday in England, a long sermon, a public dinner with the aggravation of speeches, a man with a grievance, a man in love —and so *ad infinitum*—as for the rest, Germaine, *chère amie*, after a long and affectionate study of your brother's character, do you think he can conscientiously claim to be *sans reproche?*"

"*Méchant!*" says Madame, tapping this volatile knight-errant playfully upon the arm; "but indeed I think it very possible that these chivalric gentlemen were no great heroes either in the eyes of their own generation; it may be posterity only which has dubbed them, "without reproach;" they had the advantage of living before the period of biographies however, so that the memory of a few salient virtues only, survives, and all their little unheroic failings lie comfortably buried in the grave with themselves."

"You see Mademoiselle, my sister regards the heroic position as untenable—as I do—you must depose me forthwith—hurl me from my pedestal and hide me away among other useless lumber, until a remote posterity arises which shall be capable of appreciating me."

"No, Vicomte," says Reine, shaking her head decisively and looking with frank eyes of loyal

friendship into his; "you will never be deposed."

The three have reached the end of the terrace, where they pause, looking across the fertile valley of the turbulent Rhone away to the distant hills where the sun is setting in purple, golden glory; the *château* stands on the slope of a hill in a small park belted by plantations of fine trees; a pleasant garden stretches away from the terrace southwards, with straight trim flower-beds and stony walks bordered by formal avenues of orange trees in boxes; the eye looks in vain for the green lawns, smooth as emerald velvet, the stately shady trees and luxuriant verdure of our english gardens; but as compensation for their absence, there are the sunny brightness, the genial warmth of colour, the clear, exhilarating atmosphere, and the comforting conviction that catarrh and rheumatism are comparatively unknown.

Madame de St. Cyr points out all the beauties of the landscape; Avignon with its cathedral and lofty enclosing walls, Vaucluse, by the limpid Sorgues, sacred to Petrarch and his Laura; the restless river winding among the meadows planted with quaint, straight rows of mulberry trees

or groups of dusky olive, brightened into warm rich colour by the dying sun's last rays; as twilight begins to fall a chill little breeze springs up and Madame, drawing Reine's arm within her own, carries her back to the house and the consolations of real, english tea.

Reine soon discovers that Madame de St. Cyr has the rare talent of putting others at their ease at once, by the simple expedient of being herself perfectly natural; she has no artificial manners, no forced politeness which she puts on with her velvet dress, point lace, and other little accessories of toilette; she is affable, well-bred and genial at all times, with that natural unstudied courtesy which is free from all mannerism, affectation or striving after effect.

And so it comes to pass that after partaking of an excellent dinner, served to perfection, to which the hostess does full justice and which De Ferrières succeeds in making very gay, Reine is surprised to find that she feels herself quite at home, and when, presently, after a quiet evening in the pretty cosy boudoir, Madame kisses her again as she wishes her good-night and with a kindly "*dormez bien, mon enfant,*" leaves her in her comfortable room, she has lost in some measure that overwhelming sense of utter loneli-

ness which has been ever present with her since her father's death; and falls asleep thinking with gratitude of the faithful "Bayard," who has known so well what is best for her and who has been so good to her in her distress.

The days pass away in pleasant peaceful monotony; Jules has returned to the delights of domestic life in Baden, where he is energetically engaged in the laudable effort to render his homely spouse more worthy of her brillant destiny—an occupation very congenial to the masculine mind which unfortunately is rarely crowned with the success it merits.

Madame de St. Cyr and Reine have become excellent friends, thereby furnishing another proof of the Vicomte's perspicacity; Madame has even begun to ask herself how she existed before this new element of brightness came to cheer her lonely life—to dread the blank it must leave behind when it departs; one great bond of sympathy is their common love of music, and poor De Ferrières is much exercised in spirit, during the long winter evenings while the two enthusiasts, oblivious of his existence, plod away cheerfully hour after hour, through acres of classical intricacies, which von Waldeck dispatches for Reine's edification: he is grateful when the

curé drops in to play a game of chess, in which Madame excels, or to confer with the Lady Bountiful of his parish, and chat pleasantly with her pretty, heretical little friend, so breaking the spell of these incomprehensible harmonies.

As their friendship ripens rapidly into affection it becomes Reine's delight to talk to Madame of her father; to dwell upon every detail of her cloudless childhood, every incident of her happy youth; and the elder woman listens half enviously as each white page of the girl's little history is unfolded and she recognizes the perfect love, the complete concord of thought and feeling, the bond between parent and child at its rarest, "closest, and sweetest," which has existed between these two. Incidentally Reine mentions Treherne, shyly at first; then, insensibly all her little secrets are poured into Madame's sympathetic ear, and she tells the story of Sir Angus, of her own remorse concerning her share in that lamentable affair, and of the sorrow and perplexity Treherne's unaccountable behaviour—dating from that period which seems the commencement of all her woes—has caused her.

Madame de St. Cyr becomes aware as she listens, that unless this enigmatical young Englishman is even colder, stranger and more

impassive than the rest of his unimpressionable race, any day-dreams she or her brother may indulge in, regarding this most desirable Vicomtesse De Ferrières *in posse*, are vain; the discovery, or rather the certainty, is a keen disappointment to her. It has long been her ardent wish, and one which of late she has begun to despair of ever seeing accomplished, that her brother should marry and duly and respectably perpetuate his ancient name; celibacy in his case she regards as little short of a crime; a break in the direct line unbroken since remote ages, an earth upon which no rightfully descended De Ferrières peregrinates—are horrible possibilities, showing an alarming tendency to develop into still more horrible realities, which Madame cannot contemplate with anything approaching to equanimity. Here is a bride ready made as it were, who might well satisfy her brother's fastidious taste in every particular; who entertains for him already, by her own confession, a species of romantic admiration, and who moreover is possessed of a "*dot*," Cupid's indispensable accessory from a french point of view—which is not to be despised; in Madame's eyes Reine is worthy of a De Ferrières, she can, in her own opinion, bestow no higher praise on mortal

woman—and it provokes her beyond measure that fate in the shape of a tiresome Englishman, should interpose a meddling finger, to mar her little plot.

Winter is fast advancing, and even in that sunny corner of the earth the days are sometimes chill; the Vicomte beguiles the morning hours "*à la chasse*," for which he arrays himself in an elaborate green suit fearfully and wonderfully made; adorned with buttons the size of small saucers, upon each of which is engraved some exciting episode of the chase; he wears a large hat of the brigand type graced by trophies of his —or some one else's—victories over the feathered tribes; a large netted bag, deeply fringed, is slung across his shoulder by a broad leather strap which is painfully new; and Reine observes that this ornamental appendage usually returns as it sets out, a prey to that vacuum which nature is said to abhor.

Meeting Bayard one fine morning on the terrace thus equipped "*en chasseur*," Reine thinks he would make a very handsome Robin Hood, for a fancy ball, with the substitution of a bow and arrows for the more murderous weapon of modern days.

"Good morning, Vicomte," she says as the

brigand hat goes off and she feels terribly apprehensive that the gun may follow its example; "I see you are bent upon slaughtering the soft-eyed partridges and pretty little hares; it makes me unhappy only to think of it."

"*Comment, Mademoiselle?* You say this—you—an Englishwoman! Do you not then know that the first thought of your blood-thirsty compatriots when they wake up in the morning is invariably: 'What shall we kill?'"

"Ah! yes indeed, and it must be worse—much worse—for the English they say hit nearly everything they shoot at—the poor little birds have no chance of escape," returns Reine innocently, and De Ferrières with a wave of the hand strides off on his deadly errand in the conviction that he is the beau-ideal of a thoroughly workman-like sportsman. It is given indeed to very few men never to look ridiculous—was not even the great Gibbon once discovered upon his knees before the object of his affections, unable to rise by reason of his excessive corpulence?—and so history is compelled to admit that the Vicomte "*à la chasse*" does look as nearly ridiculous as his distinguished appearance will allow.

As time goes on De Ferrières fluctuates be-

tween the *château* and Paris; when Reine's seductiveness renders the paternal vein too difficult, he betakes himself to the pleasures of the capital, returning presently to find her more irresistible than ever, with the old roses beginning to bloom again in her cheeks and something of her former *riante* brightness, to him so charming, sometimes lighting up her face. His beloved Paris indeed gives him no such keen delight, as to wander with this fair young girl through the fields and woods of that balmy southern land, which even grim old winter touches with such a kindly, tender hand: in the evening as he smokes his cigar upon the terrace by the light of a beautiful moon, he leans across the stone balustrade listening for Reine's voice singing, which comes to him on the pure, still air; and he says to himself that fortune has played him a cruel trick in showing him this glimpse of happiness, this spectre of what might have been, just twenty years or so too late—and that his young friend Treherne has certainly "*de la chance*" in this life.

Returning one day from one of these Parisian excursions De Ferrières tells Reine that after some difficulty, due to a change of domicile, he has succeeded in unearthing Madame Roland,

and having "interviewed" the old lady himself and investigated her antecedents, he is in a position to recommend her as an efficient and desirable watch-dog.

"Curiously enough, Mademoiselle, I found I had known something of her husband in my old Algerian days; one runs up against everybody sooner or later in this overcrowded world; we became so friendly over our little reminiscences and I found our *tête-à-tête* so delightful that I returned again and again; I was introduced to the sparrows in the Tuileries gardens—a special performance was arranged for my edification: it is really most curious, Germaine, the birds know this old lady as well as your school children here, in the village, know you—she must be gifted with some species of magnetic attraction—indeed I experienced its force myself, and were it not that she is too young for me, I might on further acquaintance be tempted to offer her my hand and heart—always supposing I could collect the scattered fragments of the latter and piece them together with some subtly compounded substance, as Germaine mends her precious china, when it comes to grief. Do you believe in the existence of such a compound, Mademoiselle Reine—strong enough to patch up a heart which has been

divided and subdivided into minute particles, so that it shall still be able to withstand the wear and tear of matrimony?"

"At what age pray do you intend to leave off talking nonsense, Tristan, may I ask?" enquires Madame de St. Cyr.

"At no age I devoutly hope, my sister; for when I take to silence or to the utterance of 'pure reason' only, (I do not know which is the more unlikely of the two,) I shall be sure my end is very near; and I find so much that is entertaining in this little human comedy, I assure you I am in no hurry to play out my part in it."

"Madame Roland is then willing to come to live with me?" asks Reine.

"Perfectly—she is only desolated at the idea of leaving the birds—is it an enviable state of existence or the reverse I wonder, to feel that one's interests, responsibilities and regrets, are centred in a flock of humble sparrows? It has its advantages no doubt—I comforted her with the assurance that her feathered children are as inexterminable as the human race—I told her, moreover, that the arrangement could only be a temporary one—that for the office of permanent gaoler, there would be so many candidates, the only difficulty would be in the selection—this

once made, her own position would become a sinecure."

"And what did Madame Roland reply to this amiable little fiction?" Reine asks, looking into De Ferrières' face which is half-laughing, half-wistful, as he reflects that that coveted appointment will, at any rate, never fall to his lot.

"She was much struck with the justice of my remarks."

"She is evidently a person of superior discrimination."

"Let Madame Roland stay with her birds and you with me, *petite*," says Madame de St. Cyr, "we are very happy, are we not?"

"But I must go back to Baden—for a time," says Reine, with eyes grown suddenly shy, "later I will come back if you will let me."

"Always, *chère enfant*, more willingly than I can tell you."

"Germaine," says De Ferrières when he finds himself alone with his sister, "do not try to persuade Mademoiselle Reine to alter her determination; she will never be at rest until Treherne declares himself in one direction or the other; the surest way to attain that end is for him to return and find her alone, in the same scenes in which he lately left her so happy, in her bright

surroundings with her father who was almost everything in the world to her, at her side; this spectacle, unless he has a heart of stone, which I do not believe, must bring home to him, both the loneliness of the poor child and the gravity of the trust confided to him—it will help him as nothing else can, to interpret Challoner's eccentric act as he, I feel sure, meant it to be interpreted: Treherne, if he is a man of honour, which I do not doubt, will either ask Mademoiselle to marry him—for I will admit now, Germaine, that you possess her entire confidence, that I guessed her little secret long ago—or he will give some very good reason for running away from the loveliest little Eve that ever made Paradise delightful."

"You suspect some entanglement on his part?"

De Ferrières shrugs his shoulders. "One knows what idiots young fellows are—to me, who have seen them together so much, this wild-goose expedition to South America, appears the act of a madman."

"Reine is persuaded that he resents her engagement to this 'Sir Maxwell' who died in that shocking manner."

"I have seen Treherne look as if he were prepared to forgive her worse crimes than that."

"It is not easy to understand however why, if he were so *épris*, he did not declare himself, before ever she met 'Sir Maxwell.'"

"Fortune at her old game of cross-purposes probably."

"Ah! *pauvre enfant!* there have indeed been sad scenes in her young life already."

"There would have been sadder from all I hear of that young man, had he lived; well! *nous verrons*—adieu—my sister—I go to shoot you a little pheasant, very tender, for your dinner"—(the only promise the Vicomte ever fails to fulfil).

Christmas has come and gone—a sunshiny green Christmas pleasantly free from that abomination of desolation, we poor Northerners denominate, "seasonable weather;" there have been mild little festivities at the *château*, and Madame in her capacity of Lady Bountiful has distributed gifts to all her *protégés;* but the New Year dawns strangely and sadly for Renie; for her father is not there to take her in his arms and invoke blessings innumerable and happiness on the beloved head of his lonely little girl; and all Madame's tender love and sympathy—all the Vicomte's genial kindness, are powerless to fill this terrible void.

The middle of January brings Reine consolation in the shape of a letter from Treherne, forwarded by Jules from Baden; at sight of the well-known writing and unfamiliar post-mark her heart sinks —for why has he not come? Surely, if ever he will come back to her, it should be now at this, the time of her grievous sorrow—how grievous, how irremediable he should know better than any other.

She carries the precious document up to her own room and opens it with trembling hands; it is very short and the writing is shaky and undecided, quite unlike Treherne's usual firm, bold characters; such as it is, however, it delights and comforts her more than a volume from another pen; for Cupid, whatever his other shortcomings may be, is a shining example of charitable leniency, to all carping critics.

"My poor Little Reine,—

"No words can tell you how grieved I am at this terrible calamity, or how much I blame myself for going away and leaving you to face this cruel blow alone; but, I acted for the best as I thought, and as you must try, though it is hard, to believe.

"I write with great difficulty, for I am laid up with a sharp attack of fever, and have been, they

tell me, delirious for the last two days; I woke to find your letter and De Ferrières', and it is only by reading them over and over again that I can convince myself, that they are not part and parcel of my late hallucinations. Were it not for this unfortunate fact of my illness the steamer which will take this, would I need scarcely say, have taken me, but the doctor assures me that, were I to persist in sailing at this juncture, I should, in all probability, never arrive at all—or at any rate only in such a condition as to be an additional anxiety, instead of any assistance to you; I have therefore reluctantly decided to err on the side of prudence.

"I shall, however, leave by the french mail and shall I trust be with you in less than three weeks after you receive this—I will telegraph from Bordeaux; I cannot write any more, but you will know that physical weakness constrains me to leave so much I feel, unsaid—God bless you, my little Reine.

"Ever with truest sympathy.

"JASPER."

Reine carries this epistle to Madame de St. Cyr, whom she discovers in her boudoir busily engaged upon a high-art altar cloth, destined as

a little surprise for her good friend the *curé*, while the great Bayard lies at full length upon the parquet floor, with his long sleek nose stretched out to catch a stray gleam of sunshine; Reine seats herself on a low stool and, laying her head on Madame's knee, says softly—"I have good news."

"But bad news then for me I fear, *petite, n'est-ce-pas?*" returns Madame, running her white fingers through the girl's glossy curls.

"Jasper is coming—is even now on the road."

"And I am to rejoice at the coming of this tiresome 'Jaspaire,' who will steal you away from me? Ah! but that is too much to expect from a selfish old woman."

At this moment De Ferrières "*en chasseur*," appears at the window which gives upon the terrace; Reine runs to admit him, with the good tidings on her lips; then suddenly overcome by a strange shyness, stands before him, blushing, and leaves the tale untold; he knows it instinctively however, for there is a light in her eyes which has not been there for many long, sad days; accustomed as he has grown to watch her every expression, he notes the change instantly, with the conviction that it

is only given to one fortunate individual in the world to have worked the metamorphosis.

The Vicomte deposits his gun, with which he never seems quite at ease, carefully against the balcony outside, and entering, is acquainted by his sister with that which he already knows.

"And will you take me back to Baden?" says Reine, still shyly, for there is a constraint in his manner, and in his face is reflected none of the gladness which lights up her own; "for Jasper is ill—very ill—and will perhaps want nursing when he arrives."

"Lucky devil!" thinks De Ferrières—then aloud with a graciousness that is a little forced—"I am sorry to hear that, Mademoiselle; what is the matter—nothing serious, I hope?"

"Fever," says Reine, fixing great anxious eyes on his.

"Fever is an elastic word," he says smiling.

"That is all Jasper says however; will you read his letter?"

It pleases him somewhat to reflect that this weighty epistle should be sufficiently brotherly and commonplace to admit of its perusal by a third person, though he is annoyed with himself for the feeling; he glances through

it hastily, and returning it remarks with his normal paternal air, fully re-established,—

"A sharp attack of simple fever I should think—no—Mademoiselle, there is no cause for alarm I assure you. I have had, well! perhaps a dozen—I cannot say I shall be happy to escort you to Baden;" he adds smilingly, "but I will do so any day you may appoint; though as Treherne cannot arrive for a fortnight, there is I hope no immediate hurry—he will land at Bordeaux and probably come straight across to Baden; I should suggest that you write to your lawyer desiring him to forward any papers he may have for your guardian, to await his arrival there."

Reine agrees, and De Ferrières lingers a second or two and says a few words to his sister, then taking up his gun outside, stands before the window whistling for his dogs; suddenly a small white hand is laid upon his green sleeve and a soft voice says reproachfully, while he hastily lays aside his weapon again, whose good behaviour he can never guarantee; "you are not glad that Jasper is coming—why is that?"

"I am glad at everything which makes you happy, believe me."

"But I have a presentiment that he will never

return—it is too good to be true—so many misfortunes have befallen me lately."

"He will return safe and sound—have no fear—a touch of fever, what is that? Nothing at all;" he answers with an abruptness very unusual with him, looking for an instant into her upturned face, then walking away quickly with his dogs at his heels.

"Your brother does not like Jasper," remarks Reine meditatively, in rather an aggrieved tone, re-entering.

"On the contrary, he thinks him a most agreeable, distinguished young man," returns Madame de St. Cyr with a pleasant insincerity, thoroughly french; "only he is perhaps a little uncharitably disposed towards him just now—as I am—because he comes to take you away from us."

"But he shall not take me away—and I belonged to him first;" the girl cries with her arms round the old lady's neck, who stands rather aghast at this avowal—this strange english idea of love, which seems to soar away into regions where "*les convenances, dot,*" and all such materialistic considerations are utterly unknown.

January is drawing to a close when Reine returns to Baden, whither Madame Roland has preceded her; she parts from Madame de St. Cyr

with heartfelt regret, and from the Vicomte no less sorrowfully, when, having seen her once more safely installed at the *châlet*, under Jules' vigilant eye, he wishes her good-bye with feelings of genuine sadness, only half-concealed by his laughing assurance, that he is and ever will remain her own true knight, and has not the slightest intention of resigning his position in favour of any youthful aspirant—"not Jasper nor another."

Winter holds beautiful Baden a prisoner in its icy chain: the pine needles sparkle with glistening crystals, the feathery firs are embroidered with a myriad delicate, white traceries, the hills and valleys are wrapt in a thick mantle of purest snow; the fountain in the Allée is like a miniature iceberg, which has strayed earthwards, and the great flooded meadow at the end of the gardens, is frozen as hard and smooth as a sheet of polished glass.

Jules is so happy to see Reine back again that he forgets to grumble at Therèse for one whole week, and waxes eloquent upon the wonders the air of his beloved France has worked in the appearance of Mademoiselle; only, when the incarcerated Coquin's dismal howlings betray the fact that she has resumed her pilgrimages to the cemetery, in this bitter weather, he permits him-

self a mild yet firm remonstrance, as he waylays Reine on her return, at his usual post of observation on the bridge.

"Ah! Jules!" she says, leaning across the wooden rail and looking dreamily away towards the snow-clad hills—"you do not know what a veritable *mal de pays* I have had after that little corner of ground—but—I shall not go there often—it saddens me too much—so do not scold me any more;" then after a second's pause turning to him with moistened eyes; "and thank you, my good, kind Jules for all the care you have taken—fresh violets even now lie under the sprinkling of last night's snow."

"Ah! Mademoiselle—those flowers they are a puzzle," he replies shrugging his shoulders up to his ears; "Therèse believes they are the work of the saints; her brain, poor creature, is of that sort which is ripe for miracles: little Jules gives the credit to the fairies, and I who, *hélas!* have not much faith in either saints or fairies believe that Monsieur le Vicomte commanded them to be put there in Mademoiselle's absence."

"Perhaps—ah! but no!" adds Reine hastily with a smile, as little Jules' "fairy" appears to her vivid imagination in the guise of a curly-headed, epauletted, very mortal young man; and with this

lucid utterance she walks slowly up the garden, leaving Jules unenlightened.

A few days later Reine and Madame Roland are walking at the side of the improvised lake watching the crowd of skaters disporting itself more or less gracefully upon the ice: there is the usual assemblage of stoutly-built, substantial damsels and oddly-garmented civilians, with the inevitably large percentage of parti-coloured military, figuring in couples, trios, singly, or romping hand in hand in long, impenetrable chains—(the terror of the unsteady inexpert), like the happy, good-humoured, over-grown babies that they are: here and there enamoured swains fly swiftly across the shining surface, bearing their beloved in a sledge, far from the eyes of attendant chaperons, who sit, watchful but shivering, upon the surrounding benches, or pace diligently up and down in the effort to promote circulation in their numbed, almost frost-bitten feet.

A handsome, smiling young man detaches himself from a group who are chattering in the middle of the lake, and skates rapidly towards the bank where Reine and her duenna stand.

"Good morning, *gnädiges Fräulein:* I did not know you had returned;" says von Waldeck, climbing the steep bank skilfully, his bronzed

face, which has not yet recovered from its summer tanning, ruddy with the exercise and frosty air, and manifest pleasure shining in his blue eyes, at this unexpected piece of good fortune.

"I only came back two or three days ago," says Reine giving him a fur-gloved hand, which to the chagrin of several pairs of jealous eyes, the faithless Herr Lieutenant takes with much *empressement.*

He looks inquiringly in the direction of Madame Roland, to whom he is presented and upon whom he bestows a regulation military salute, to which that patriotic Frenchwoman responds by a formal little bow.

"You are well, I trust; your health is quite restored?" proceeds Max with a tender interest which proves that absence—that Scylla and Charybdis combined, of constancy—has not availed to efface the remembrance of Reine; "but I need scarcely ask," he adds, looking admiringly at the lovely face, in which the keen wind has dyed the blush roses red; in which a hope of which, happily for his peace of mind, he has no suspicion, makes the eyes lately so sad, shine with their old brightness.

"I am quite well," she answers in german, and Madame Roland, perhaps to escape from the

obnoxious accents, moves away and begins a promenade along the bank on her own account; while Jean-Jacques with dignified fidelity sits shivering under his thick coat, at his mistress's feet, and Coquin who does not relish this unprofitable delay, in the present state of the thermometer, sets up a dismal howl of remonstrance.

"Do not let me detain you, Herr Lieutenant," says Reine nervously, haunted by the fear of the proprieties, recalling De Ferrières' several wise discourses on that all-important subject; "I am preventing you skating and keeping you from your friends; those young ladies do not look pleased, they think I have deprived them of their cavalier."

"Ach! that is nothing," says von Waldeck with base ingratitude; "I have skated enough, and it is so long since I saw you, *Fräulein*——"

"Is that lady staying with you now?" he asks suddenly with the happy thought, that with so fitting a representative of propriety present, there can be no reason why the long closed portals of the *châlet* should not open unto him once again.

"Yes—she lives with me now; she is my protector—my keeper."

"So—o! it would also be very lonely fo
without any companion—but *Fräulein*, excu
—is she always so silent: is she perhaps du
"Not at all," answers Reine laug
"though for a woman, she is perhaps a
silent; but she is french; she has never be
your country before, and you know that sinc
you have supplanted us, as the 'perfid
nation; I do not think Madame Roland has
confronted the enemy before; she is the widc
a french officer and she lost two sons at Sédan
"That is very sad—but it is the fortun
war—well! if they had made their little
menade *à Berlin* perhaps we should not
liked it any better than they did ours to Pa
but I hope you will not permit that enthusi
french patriot to banish me altogether, *Fräule*
when may I be allowed to try Brahms'
—which you have been good enough to
with you?"

Reine hesitates: by some instantaneous
of occult mental heliography she pictures
herself Jasper's sudden advent upon a
which von Waldeck, Brahms and
figuring in the principal rôles;
monster—exit Jasper in his
standing—confusion—curtain.

"A little later," she returns, hurriedly holding out her hand; "at present I am scarcely settled; the piano is out of tune and everything at sixes and sevens; good-bye, Herr Lieutenant—I really must go."

They shake hands and Reine runs off to rejoin Madame Roland, while to the dismay of several expectant fair ones, von Waldeck unstraps his skates and walks off cruelly in the direction of the town.

But for some reason which Reine cannot explain to her own satisfaction, she has been unable to refer, however remotely, to those mysterious flowers which lie upon her father's grave, though, throughout her interview with Max, the words have been trembling on her lips, and by one of those subtle instincts which are the exclusive product of the feminine brain, she feels morally convinced that he, and no other, is responsible for their appearance.

CHAPTER VII.

Till one fair morn
There came a joyful message, "He has come."
EPIC OF HADES.

"ARRIVED—I shall be with you as soon as possible;" this is Treherne's telegram for which Reine has been waiting so anxiously, and which Jules himself carries to her with a triumphant smile on his good-natured face.

And surely it is a curious coincidence that the discriminating birds should choose this day to begin to sing again, that the little stream's murmur should have music in it once more, as in happier days, that Reine as she wanders round the garden should discover the first snowdrops thrusting their green-edged bells shyly through the snow.

All day she is very restless; twenty times she walks to the bridge and like "sister Anne" scans the road and with the same result, until twilight falls, the evening passes away slowly and Reine is compelled to admit the wisdom of Jules' assertion, that Treherne, travel he never so swiftly,

seeing that he is dependent upon prosaic steam and iron, cannot arrive before the next day; so this foolish little personage resigns herself unwillingly to a sleepless night, which, when she is twenty years older, she will know, if she is wise, no man is worth; and tosses impatiently in her white bed till dawn, while the wintry moon peeps through the half-closed jalousies and looks down with her serene, impassive smile upon the small perturbed mortal within.

At seven Reine is up and dressed, though well aware that Treherne, even if he catches the first train, cannot arrive until nine; she devotes her leisure moments to the personal adornment of the dogs, who are ruthlessly snatched from their slumbers to endure the canine martyrdom of a thorough brushing and combing, and are finally made beautiful with a ribbon of Jasper's favourite hue.

She is at breakfast when Jules suddenly opens the door and cries at last "Monsieur is here." Madame Roland effaces herself discreetly, while Reine, who has spent the best part of twenty-four hours watching for "Monsieur's" coming, now that he is here, seems, curiously enough, in no hurry to meet him; but Coquin rushes out in an excited state into the corridor, and she hears his

defiant bow-wow-wow turn to a note of glad recognition—hears, as if in a dream, Jules' voice greeting the new-comer, Jasper's familiar anglican french responding, and then she finds herself folded in two arms, and crying half in sorrow, half in gladness, upon a prickly, rough brown ulster.

In the sadness of after-days Reine treasures the remembrance of that first meeting after long months of misery and separation, as one of those episodes of happiness which even the least fortunate contrive once or twice in a lifetime to snatch from the grudging hand of fate; later on, when the world seems unutterably empty and dreary, the poor child reproaches herself for her complaining; asking herself bitterly whether, taking into consideration her happy childhood, her father's love, and the recollection of those first moments of perfect peace and security in the joy of that reunion with the man she loves—she has any just cause of complaint: whether as much gladness has not been crowded into her short twenty years, as judiciously divided, subdivided and apportioned would have more than sufficed to brighten the regulation fourscore years and ten.

Reine cries so long and tears so copious that Treherne begins to despair of consoling her; this

lachrymose unnerved Reine is indeed a stranger to him, and as he holds her close to his heart he understands the intensity of the suffering which has thus transformed her, and he realizes also the depth of that love, which manifests itself in the restful clinging of those two fair arms about his throat.

"Reine, child!" he says, having exhausted his vocabulary of endearments and all his ingenuity in the endeavour to stem the torrent; "don't—don't cry any more; I shall begin to think you are not glad to see me after all."

"I am not glad," she says, throwing back her head and looking up into his face, her own tear-stained, yet happy; "one is glad at anything—if the day is fine for instance; I am much more than glad that you are back again: there is no word which could tell you half I feel—just as there is none which could tell you how desolate I have been since you went away and left me—quite alone."

"My poor little girl," he answers, tenderly; "I could not know that you would be alone."

As he speaks he looks wistfully into that up-turned face, so lovely, struggling between its smiles and tears, and with its look of suffering, which to him is so unfamiliar; his eyes are

sunken and restless, his face is careworn, his cheeks have grown leaner; with a sigh he relaxes his arms, as a knock at the door announces that Jules is of opinion that sufficient time has been devoted to sentiment, and that the traveller's more material comforts should now be taken into consideration.

"Ah! but it is Monsieur who has the air ill," says Jules contemplating Treherne's lean countenance with a critical eye; "Monsieur is without doubt much fatigued by the voyage—and then—he has been suffering!"

"I am all right again now, Jules; the voyage put me square;" returns Treherne, setting to work upon the good things Monsieur Galette has prepared for his delectation.

"And how does Monsieur find Mademoiselle looking?"

"Better than I expected."

"Ah! I am content—but that is the good air of our France," he says with a look of triumph as he departs.

"You have been to France, Reine?"

"Yes—to Avignon; I have been staying with the Vicomte's sister; she has been so good to me—almost like my own mother; and what

should I have done without *him?* Indeed, it is only lately I have realized all he has been to me; for a long time I was so stunned I think I took everything as a matter of course."

Through this foolish young man's brain shoots a pang of that passion—the most unreasonable, intolerable and ungovernable of all passions—Reine's tears are still wet on his cheek, where hers has been pressed close to it; round his neck he still feels the soft warm pressure of her arms; in her eyes he may read if he will what no other man on earth has ever read in them, and yet the tyrannical sultan element, ever present in that noble creature, man, is jealous and dissatisfied.

"So De Ferrières is as devoted as ever;" he says with the ghost of a sneer; and having the grace to feel ashamed of himself, hides his face straightway in his coffee-cup.

"He has been like a second father to me—the best and truest friend possible."

"And all without hope of reward! Such disinterestedness in these days is rare."

"Jasper! have you quite forgotten how to be generous or even just; is there no room in your mind for anything except distrust and suspicion?"

Rising hurriedly he goes over to where she stands and taking her hands in his, says with

strange earnestness: "Don't let us quarrel to-day, little Reine; let us at least have the peaceful remembrance of this one day to look back upon; if I seem a brute, an utter barbarian, forgive me —and bear with me, for no man in all the world, is more wretched than I."

"But why?" she asks, with a frightened look into his dark, troubled eyes.

"I will answer that question to-morrow; give me at least to-day."

"To-day and to-morrow and always let us be friends, for I have only you now," she responds with tearful solemnity.

To this pathetic appeal he makes no rejoinder, and she continues with hesitation and a certain nervous shyness of which she cannot divest herself in his presence: "It seems you are fated to be troubled with me—do you know about *père*'s will?"

"De Ferrières' letter told me I was appointed your guardian: a little time ago, how I should have blessed your father for that legacy!"

"But now—you are sorry?"—with downcast eyes and a little smile, which would be saucy were it not so sad, playing round the corners of her mouth.

"Sorry!" repeats Treherne, brusquely yet with an intonation which has the curious effect of causing Reine's head to droop lower, until her face is hidden away upon his shoulder. "Great God! was ever the right road—never easy—made so difficult for mortal man?"

Where she lies she can hear his heart beating fast and wildly with a strong man's suppressed emotion; looking up she becomes aware that the eyes of this much-exercised, usually adamantine mortal are full of tears; a soft arm steals gently round his neck, two lips rest for a brief second lightly on his cheek.

"Let me share your unhappiness, Jasper—I am not afraid."

"That is the worst part of it," he answers with bitter emphasis; "that you *must* share it; it is maddening to think that I, who would have died to save you from unhappiness, should be the one miserable being singled out of all the world, to hurt you—you poor dear little girl! Oh! Reine child," he cries suddenly putting her away from him in danger of losing his hardly-preserved self-control, "don't look at me like that! if you only knew the temptation that lurks in those eyes of yours; night and day for weeks I have been nerving myself to fight this

battle, and now, God help me! I have it all to do over again. Your poor father little thought when he left me,—you,—his most precious trust, that he was putting me through an ordeal, to the like of which I believe no erring human creature was ever subjected before. There are two roads before me, one of silence, deceit, feverish, unmerited happiness, yet still happiness, since we might, if you so willed it, be together —the other of truth, honour,—but loneliness unspeakable—without you; do you realize what that means to me? And then child comes the cruellest sting of all; the conviction that if I chose the wrong road you would be happier far than if I chose the right—Reine! You who have always been my good angel, help me to keep strong now; to do what my better nature—not quite dead yet, I think—tells me is right."

There are men whose emotion has in it a strong element of the ludicrous; who are moved indifferently to the same degree of passionate wailing, by the unpunctuality of the cook, the underdone condition of the domestic mutton, or the death or desertion of the beloved, and the spectacle of whose tribulation affects the stony-hearted observer no more acutely than the hysterical flutter of a silly woman; Treherne is

not of these: he is ordinarily so calm and self-possessed, that his passion, genuine and thoroughly real, like everything else about him, startles and distresses Reine beyond measure.

"I cannot imagine you wavering for one instant, Jasper, between the two courses," she says with slow emphasis: "but, believe me, you will never forfeit my affection, whatever you may tell me: I shall love you always," she continues earnestly lifting true, solemn eyes to his; "for *père*'s sake who was so dear to both of us, and—and for your own: I should never change I think, even if you told me——"

"What?" he queries quickly, as she hesitates.

"That you loved someone else—even that you had married another woman," she concludes firmly, though the fringed lids droop and the warm blood rushes over face and neck, as she holds up this, the innermost page of her heart, for her lord's perusal.

"Married!" he cries with a grating laugh: "how often am I to repeat that I have loved you and only you, since I knew what love meant! It is a marvel to me how you can harbour such an extravagant idea."

"But—one can marry a woman without

having loved her," suggests Reine with hesitation.

"Doubtless—but I have married nobody: child, child! don't you know that there are degrees in and limits to villany! Do you suppose I should be blackguard enough to hold you in my arms, to kiss you—you who are to me the incarnation of all that is lovely and pure in woman—if I belonged, even if only legally, to another? I told you all this before Reine, have you doubted me ever since?"

"I am so puzzled—so bewildered, I have only my imagination to fall back upon; I suppose I am very foolish, but in books, you know, men do all sorts of odd things and I suppose they sometimes do the same in real life."

"That does not follow; though I admit that an inconvenient partner who takes a malicious pleasure in turning up at the wrong moment, is not unknown, outside fiction; but from this section of human-nature's weakness I may safely say I have been mercifully preserved; however, as I said before, let us take this one day,—perhaps the last you will ever give me"—he adds sadly, "for our own; you have much to tell me, and you will help me, will you not, to look through your father's papers? Where is the letter you say you have for me?"

"Everything is ready for you; come," she answers: and leads him into the little room Treherne remembers so well, where he and Challoner have sat so often chatting confidentially.

It is just as he left it, but has been scrupulously cared for; it looks cold and strange without its bright-faced, genial occupant; there is his empty chair, his writing-case with an unfinished letter between the leaves; his favourite books—a volume of Horace, of Shakespeare—of Voltaire—of Tasso; a Greek Testament with many markers, an edition of Thackeray, and a well-thumbed, dilapidated copy of his much-loved "Richard Feverel." His straw hat hangs still where he hung it, his gloves lie on the table where he threw them down, among a wilderness of pipes, cigar-cases, and other evidences of man's slavery, innumerable.

Treherne is saddened; the loss of his best friend comes home to him more thoroughly than it has ever done before: "Poor child," he says tenderly; "how have you ever lived alone among all these sad memories?"

"At first it was—I cannot tell you what it was! But indeed I have not been much alone. Madame de St. Cyr took compassion on me, as I told you: and now I have a companion—a duenna."

"That must be worse than solitude."

"No; my duenna is not as other duennas are, I think; she is discretion and unobtrusiveness personified; who do you think she is?"

"I have not an idea."

"Madame Roland; the old lady whose acquaintance we made in the Tuileries gardens."

"How curious!" he says absently, then adds with sudden interest: "and you like her? Is it an arrangement likely to last?"

"I like her—yes—but I have made no plans for the future," she returns with hesitation; "I waited until you had received *père*'s last letter in which he perhaps tells you his wishes; only when I found Hinton Challoner was not to be my guardian I declined to go to Girton and offended him very much."

"Yet Reine, your cousin is your only near relative; you are too young and too lovely my poor darling, to live alone—or even with ever such an efficient duenna."

"Still I never could go to Girton: I could not live that life, unless *père* had decreed that I should; you, who know so well all that we were to each other, must know this; but if *père's* letter still leaves me free to decide, I will go back

to Madame de St. Cyr, who will I am sure give me a warm welcome."

She speaks sadly yet with a little touch of pride; for she misconstrues Treherne's last words entirely; inferring most unjustly that her guardianship is irksome and distasteful to him and that he would have been well pleased had her cousin been chosen in his stead.

"Where is De Ferrières now?" he asks with apparent irrelevance, too much preoccupied to notice the change in her manner.

"In Paris."

"And his sister?"

"At Avignon; but why?"

He makes no reply, but stands lost in a brown study looking very grave.

"Let us go through the papers," he says presently, starting out of his reverie with a long-drawn sigh.

Treherne's labours and responsibilities as executor are light enough and not likely to prove of a complicated character; Challoner, ordinarily careless to a degree in worldly affairs, has acted in all that concerns his daughter's interests, in the most practical, business-like manner; her mother's little fortune is intact; all that he himself had power to leave her is well

invested and secure; so far Treherne's office is almost a sinecure; but it does not require Challoner's letter to convince him of that which has been patent to him from the moment De Ferrières' communication reached him—that his selection as Reine's guardian has a deeper meaning; that her father intended to signify thereby his wish that she should be his wife.

Challoner's letter runs thus; it is dated from Paris, in the February of the preceding year.

"My dear Jasper,—Walking down the *Rue de la Paix* two days ago, I was suddenly seized with giddiness, palpitation and several small maladies: I went into a chemist's, swallowed a draught, and was earnestly advised by the good pharmaceutical Samaritan who concocted the same, to consult a learned physician without delay: I laughed and assured him that my outraged liver was probably rebelling against the seductions of the parisian cuisine; but he shook his head gravely, still prescribing the physician, and as he did not recommend any particular authority, I was inclined to believe him disinterested and sincere; more especially as I caught sight of a ghostly-looking visage in the glass, which I had some difficulty in recognizing as my own.

"The next day, still feeling out of sorts I went to a man I had known for years; I described the attack minutely and told him he was quite welcome to put me in the category of the *malades imaginaires*, if he chose; he questioned me a good deal and producing several formidable weapons, proceeded to examine my heart: this accomplished, he donned his gravest professional air and inquired politely after the hearts of my parents and ancestors generally; I replied that they had never been impeached—physically at least—to my knowledge.

"'*Mais ne plaisantez donc pas;* it is serious; *très serieux méme;*' remonstrated he of the stethoscope; 'what is serious?' I asked. He took refuge in, professional fencing, 'Don't burthen your conscience with any little white lies on my account;" I said, interrupting him; I am not a coward to be frightened at a shadow or even at reality I hope; if anything is really wrong, tell me the truth.' Upon which, more fencing; my nerves were unstrung; I wanted building up; hereditary tendency to gout—suppressed—a fertile source of curious obscure symptoms, etc. etc.; the usual quibbling nonsense.

"'Am I sound or not?' I insisted; 'can you tell me?'

"'Certainly I can tell you.'

"'You are aware that your ante-room is full of patients—I decline to depart until you have told me the plain truth.'

"'You are droll, you english! Well then, no—you are not quite sound, but with care and a quiet life there is no reason why you should not live for years.'

"'Also no reason I suppose why I should not die to-day?'

"'That may be said of us all,' replied my friend opening the door insinuatingly; and promising to return in a few days, I departed.

"I came away with the conviction that the doctor is a croaker, that I shall live to nurse my great-grandchildren on my knee, and I have said and shall say nothing of all this to Reine; for if the worst should come to pass, poor child, the dread of it beforehand will not lighten the blow I think, and I shrink from casting any shadow upon her bright young life. And now to explain to you the object of this egotistical epistle, which you will never receive until I am under the sod, and then my poor *chérie* will be as nearly alone in the world as an orphan child can be—except for you.

"You, who know so well what our life is, will

readily understand my hesitation in appointing such a man as my cousin Hinton, Reine's guardian: life with him and his conventional, prudish wife, at Girton too, connected as it is inseparably, with that sad affair, would be a living death to her; and so Jasper after much anxious thought, extending over two wakeful nights, I have decided to entrust you with this my most precious legacy; and I could give you no greater proof of my affection and esteem.

"Even if I died to-day Reine would only have some eighteen months' minority to run; yet I beg of you if my death should occur in the interval not to consider the trust terminable with her majority—majority in a woman's case is for the most part a flimsy, intangible legal term, nothing more; but I pray you earnestly whenever I may be taken from her to extend to her at all times your counsel and protection, which she will sorely need.

"As for her worldly affairs you will find them in order; Mc'Grabbe can supply you with information on this score: she will be possessed of as much money as a woman requires, yet not sufficient, I devoutly trust, to render her a prey to fortune-hunters.

"Before I close this letter I will ask you one

question, believing that you know me too well to misinterpret my motive.

"Jasper, is it a revelation to you that Reine loves you; has loved you unknown to herself, ever since she was a little child? If I have made the discovery, I, who belong to the purblind race of parents, surely it can be no secret to you; but as to your feelings I am not so sure; you are and always were undemonstrative and inscrutable; if I cannot believe that any sane man can be long insensible to the goodness and loveliness of my little girl, you will I know make due allowance for the doting infatuation of a foolish member of that purblind race before referred to.

"From one or two remarks Reine has made to me of late, I feel convinced she imagines that for some reason, you resent her engagement to Maxwell: believe me, my dear boy, it is not wise to turn your back upon that rare visitant—happiness, for any such trivial cause: do not make barriers — they erect themselves surely enough. The child never cared a straw for the poor fellow who is gone: I really am the responsible and culpable person, in that sad affair; partly from constitutional carelessness, partly from an unworthy, perhaps, but still natural

desire, to see Reine occupying a position, she is, I think I may say, well qualified to adorn, I allowed matters to drift quietly along towards a climax, which, but for that terrible accident, would, I am now persuaded, have been the shipwreck of her life.

"Having been thus frank with you I will conclude in the belief that the doctor is a monomaniacal specialist who sees the spectre of a diseased heart in every simple indigestion; that I am as sound as a bell, that this letter will never reach you, but that I shall tear it up the day my dearest wish is realized—when you, I trust (but if not you, another as worthy of her), rob me of my *chérie*, and I murmur like the regulation heavy father, 'bless you, bless you, my children.'

"Yours affectionately and faithfully,

"WYVERNE CHALLONER."

This characteristic epistle Treherne peruses attentively; refolding it, he places it carefully in his pocket-book, telling Reine that she shall read it later, and proceeds with his sad task of looking through the dead man's papers; it does not take long to accomplish, and when it is finished the two, at Treherne's suggestion, set out for a long walk, through the forest, in the

direction of Eberstein Schloss; ther oad is frozen hard, the pine-branches droop beneath a heavy fringe of glistening crystals, the soft, moss carpet at their feet is hidden underneath a cold, white covering of snow.

Treherne seems to have laid aside all care and anxiety; as they mount the hill side by side he talks with kindly sympathy of Challoner, of Reine's great sorrow, and answers readily all the questions she puts to him, regarding his late travels and the illness which had filled her with alarm and terrible presentiments, happily not destined to be realized; Reine is almost happy again, only longing for the morrow, when doubt and uncertainty shall be at an end; when, having listened to his confession, she shall accord him that plenary forgiveness she has determined beforehand shall be his, whatever this dire offence may be, and peace shall reign again between them for evermore.

So the day passes away tranquilly, as happy days have a knack of passing, only too quickly; and in the evening Treherne, with a sadder heart than she dreams of, kisses Reine in the clear, frosty starlight at the bridge, and is lost among the great trees in the snowy avenue.

CHAPTER VIII.

Weil ich dich liebe, muss ich fliehen
Dein Antlitz meiden—zürne nicht!
Wie passt dein Antlitz, schön und blühend,
Zu meinem traurigen Gesicht!

HEINE.

REINE stands at the open window of the salon watching for Treherne; the sky is blue, the sun shines radiantly upon the cold, white hills; an intrepid, strong-lunged bird chirrups merrily among the bare branches of the catalpa tree, but the snow still lies deep upon the ground, and winter holds the poor starved world in its grim icy clutches.

Treherne comes with quick, impatient step across the bridge, and up the garden; Reine stretches out both hands in welcome, looking wistfully into his careworn face for an answering smile; it is paler and more sombre than ever; the restless eyes are sunk in great black circles, there is suffering about the mouth—the suffering of a resolute man who disdains outward complaint; but he is quite calm as he kisses Reine

on the forehead and inquires quietly how she has slept.

"Oh! very well; for I felt so safe now you were here again; and I was so tired: and you?" she asks shyly, leading him into the warm room, for the weather is not exactly suited to a conference *al fresco*.

"I did not sleep; they say men do sleep soundly the night before they are hanged, though I never quite believed it."

"But you are not going to be hanged—or even married," she returns, with a constrained laugh.

"No—it was the fear that a merciless little judge might condemn me to a worse fate than either, which kept me awake, I think."

There is silence for a moment, and then a sudden, irresistible impulse prompts him to clasp his arms round her and kiss her passionately; as suddenly he releases her, recovers his self-control with an effort, and when he speaks again his voice is perfectly even and natural.

"Reine, I have rehearsed this scene so often with every possible variation of detail—I have pictured to myself how you would look, what you would say, when I told you—what I am

going to tell you now—and yet, when at last the reality is before me, I feel like a man playing a part in some strange, indistinct dream. In the first place, I want you to read your father's letter to me, that you may know how smooth the wrong road has been made for me; how easily I might have held my tongue, cheating myself into the belief that my cowardice was excusable if it saved you pain; how I might have taken you for my own, with no one to interfere with me or call me scoundrel but my own conscience; no one to reproach me, but you, unconsciously with those true eyes of yours; for I knew you loved me, child; knew it when you most doubted me; when I was jealous of De Ferrières, Von Waldeck, and every man who came near you; not because they loved you, how could they help it?—but because I knew myself powerless, because unworthy, to win you from them."

"Is this true?" says Reine, looking up into his face with a smile, apparently heedless of the concluding words of this revelation; "did you really not despise me, and think me frivolous and unstable, and all sorts of disagreeable things?"

"Do you think my love would have taken fright at a shadow—an idea—or been scared by

anything less than a tangible, ghastly reality. Ah! Reine, Reine, why did you not come to me when you discovered your mistake, you would have learnt then, how much I would have dared honourably and straightforwardly for your sake."

"There was no time," she answers hurriedly; "and what does all that matter now, if—if we love each other; Jasper, tell me nothing—nothing that could part us; take me and forget all the past: I have been so unhappy I cannot bear to part from you again!"

"No! by Heavens—no!" he cries sternly, freeing himself brusquely from the clinging arms which seek to twine themselves round his; "you must know; do not *you* tempt me; for there are temptations mortal nature cannot resist; you do not know what sophistries I have cheated myself almost into believing! how I have struggled with myself since that cursed day. Last night again, after reading your father's letter the temptation to hold my peace and take the gifts the gods sent me, was almost too great; for I know I could make you happy, could I not, sweet?" he adds growing tender again, looking at her with questioning, miserable eyes.

"You and no other," she answers steadfastly.

"That is something saved out of the wreck

worth remembering; now will you read your father's letter, Reine?"

She reads it, and at sight of the familiar handwriting her tears fall fast; by the time it is finished she is sobbing pitifully in Jasper's arms.

"We love each other and *père* gives me to you; what more can you ask?" she cries despairingly, for hope cannot struggle against Treherne's ominous words; a terrible presentiment of evil takes possession of her.

He looks down tenderly at the little curly head, the tearful face lying against his heart, stooping over her he soothes her with caresses and words of fond endearment of which his lips are usually so chary, until she grows calm again; and when her tears are dried, he says to her with grave earnestness, "Listen, Reine—and if after hearing all I have to say—you have mercy or pity left for me, God knows no act of mine shall part us."

"You remember the day of the—the accident at Girton; how should you forget it?" (he sees her shudder as she makes a sign of assent). "You remember that Maxwell came late in the afternoon; that when he arrived we were sitting, you and I, on a bench talking together; you do not know perhaps that I, then and there, made the

discovery that you did not care one straw for the man you were going to marry; that he was, as I had imagined, judging by all I had ever heard of his antecedents and habits, entirely unworthy of you, and finally, that I myself loved you so well, that to give you up, and to such a man, was a pang a thousand times worse than death itself."

"He took offence because I called you 'Reine,'" proceeds Treherne with intense bitterness; "as if I had not had the right to call you 'Reine' before he ever knew of your existence!"

"Yes; I remember that, and afterwards he took me to task about you; he spoke rudely; his manner was rough; a dim suspicion that I had made a fatal mistake, which I had felt growing upon me ever since your arrival, became a certainty: it seemed to me that what I felt for Angus was merely toleration for a man who showed a preference for me; I spoke to *père* as we walked home; but I was frightened when I thought of all the trouble and annoyance that must fall on him if the marriage were broken off, though in my heart I knew then, I only cared for you; that what had happened since we parted was one great, ever-to-be-regretted mistake."

"A fatal mistake indeed; worse than a mistake, for it has ruined three lives; and so it must always be when people rush headlong into engagements from motives of vanity, interest, money or any of those insufficient reasons for which people marry now-a-days—perhaps my ideas on this subject are antediluvian, but believe me, Reine, there is only one species of capital, with which it is safe to embark in this hazardous speculation; and that is—love; for love softens all things and throws a halo round the rugged crags and crannies of life; it makes it possible for man to believe the woman the angel he sometimes calls her, and for woman to believe the man the superior being, he is so fond of asserting that he is: however, to return; for all this tardy philosophy is of little use. After I left you and Maxwell together I went on skating, in no very enviable frame of mind; returning presently from the lower end of the lake, where I had purposely retired to be out of your way, I heard a voice calling as I passed the island, and between the branches of the trees in the gathering twilight, I saw indistinctly the figure of a man, stooping—How to make you understand what followed? You, who only knew one side of the man's character

and that the best—the thin crust which covered a mind and nature essentially gross and coarse! And he was to be your husband! Heavens! was ever such sacrilege heard of, even in these days when women sell themselves every day for filthy lucre!"

At this remembrance Treherne's calmness fairly forsakes him; he puts Reine's little trembling hand which hitherto he has held between his own, away from him, drops into a chair and hiding his face on his arms groans in bitterness of spirit.

"He is dead; let him rest in peace," says Reine pitifully: her face is as white as death, for a horrible dread she scarcely dare shape into a thought has taken possession of her.

"True—let me be merciful and generous—as I hope for mercy from you," he answers looking up, and while her eyes fix themselves in mute terror upon his troubled face, he continues more calmly:—

"I skated to the island where I found Max well; something had gone wrong with the strap of his skate.

"'Got a knife about you?' he called as I came up—then recognizing me, he added, 'oh! it's you, is it?' and began to work with

out taking further notice of me, seemingly engrossed with his occupation.

"I ought to have gone off and left such an ill-mannered fellow to his fate—unfortunately common politeness, and my naturally obliging disposition prompted me to remain.

"'It is I; my knife is at your disposal if it is of any service to you,' I said, handing it to him.

"I will try to tell you clearly and circumstantially what happened, Reine; but it was all so sudden, so unexpected, it seems even now so utterly incredible, that although the horrible reality has been ever present with me, through all these weary months, I feel sometimes as if I should one day wake up to find it all a ghastly, hideous nightmare. Reine, in other days before I took this burthen on my shoulders," he adds, looking pleadingly into her frightened eyes, "I think you knew me for a truthful straightforward man; if I have acted a lie, I do not think I deceive myself when I say, that it has been mainly in the hope of sparing you suffering, my poor little girl. I swear to you by all I hold most sacred that I am speaking the absolute bare truth, extenuating nothing: will you believe me now and afterwards when you will have cause to

think worse of me; for no living soul can prove or disprove my words?"

"I believe you entirely," she answers, tremulously, and Treherne with solemn emphasis proceeds:—

"Maxwell took the knife without a word, and began to make a new hole in the strap; feigning an interest I certainly did not feel—in the desire to conciliate him for your sake—I stooped over his shoulder and remarked that the leather seemed altogether rotten, and further made offer of a spare strap I happened to have in my pocket.

"He did not answer; but swore a little at his failure to repair the damage, and went on whistling some music-hall tune, I suppose with the amiable object of making his contempt for me more apparent. When it has cost one some trouble to be civil, for the sake of others, to an individual one would much prefer kicking downstairs, it is not exactly agreeable to find one's well-meant efforts insolently ignored; I was irritated—less perhaps at the mere fact of the man's rudeness to me personally, than at the thought that you were to be thrown away on this brainless, horsey, cursing, ill-bred fellow; however I swallowed my wrath for I wanted no quarrel,

and was turning to go, when he cried out, 'here's your knife' and threw it after me, as one throws a bone to a dog; it fell short, not far from him; he looked up in my face with an insolent, idiotic laugh.

"'May I trouble you to pick up my knife?' I said, still studiously polite.

"'Oh! certainly Mr. What's-your-name,' he answered gracefully, in a tone and with an inane chuckle, which made my blood boil. Thinking of you, Reine, and pitying you from the bottom of my heart, I forebore still, though I would have given a great deal for the satisfaction of hitting him a good one between the eyes."

"'My name, sir, is Treherne,' I remarked quietly.

"'It matters deuced little to me what it is,' he answered, with another meaningless chuckle; while, seeing probably that I was in earnest and that he had gone too far, he stooped to pick up the knife which lay on the ice between us.

"As he did so, a little case without any clasp fell out of his breast-pocket, almost at my feet—open; the moon had risen and there was light enough to show me your face, Reine, quite plainly, which had fallen from its rightful place, in the world's eyes, next this wretched fellow's

heart; as he handed me the knife, I stooped instinctively to pick up your picture, with the intention of restoring it to him, for he apparently had not noticed it lying upon the ground, close to where he stood.

"'Leave that alone, you damned, impudent beggar, will you,' he broke out suddenly; 'and learn not to interfere with what does not concern you; perhaps you think I did not see you philandering after Miss Challoner; holding her hand in yours, by Jove! curse your impudence! You had better learn at once that I am not the man to stand sham brothers—no more brothers than I am—dangling after my wife—or any infernal nonsense of that sort; and so I have taken care to tell her.'

"'Then you have insulted a lady to very little purpose,' I rejoined hotly; I was furious at his insulting manner, his dictatorial air, his assumption of authority regarding you; and I added imprudently, 'Reine knows me too well.'——To any other man, or to him under other circumstances, probably I should have spoken of you as Miss Challoner; before I could finish my sentence he—I think he must have been mad—he hit me a blow in the face; a feeble blow with wavering uncertain aim, for he was standing among the

branches insecurely, unevenly, with one foot on the low bank of the island, the other still hampered by the skate: it sufficed however to rouse me to fury added to all that had gone before, for I am not a meek individual under provocation: I hit him a savage blow in return—he dodged to avoid it and I caught him behind the ear; he fell with a crash among the boughs and I, having skates on, lost my balance as I struck out at him and rolled over at his side: I was up in a second, but he never moved: bending over him I saw that he had crashed with tremendous violence on to the upturned blade of his other skate, which he had thrown down on the bank while he repaired the strap: I tried to free him; to staunch the blood which gushed in a crimson stream from the ghastly gash; impossible: I skated in all directions looking for assistance; not a soul was left upon the lake: I returned; I felt his pulse—his heart—I could not detect the faintest pulsation or sign of respiration; his hands began to grow cold and rigid, and as the horrible truth forced itself upon me, I became aware that the affair, so far as I was concerned, had a very ugly look indeed. Reine, Maxwell, my enemy was dead, and it was I who had killed him."

At this point Treherne pauses abruptly in his

story, looking into Reine's face yearningly, imploringly, with eyes which might melt a marble statue to pity, seeking some sign of that mercy and compassion for which his heart craves so sorely; but he sees no evidence of suffering, no trace of commiseration in her strange, stony eyes and white parted lips; nor a vestige of the horror and shrinking loathing, his imagination has pictured whenever he has rehearsed this scene—nothing but blank bewilderment and utter incredulity.

"You—Jasper, killed Angus," the poor child repeats in a whisper, as though she were learning by heart some difficult—incomprehensible lesson.

"God knows not wittingly!" he says gasping like a man in acute bodily pain; "though my hand gave the blow which sent him to his death."

"Your hand!" she echoes still incredulous; while the horror he has been dreading begins to dawn in her eyes.

"I have said so—is it not enough—for pity's sake do not keep me on the rack, it is torture to me; cannot you understand?"

"No," she answers in the same strange, awed voice, which comes panting with difficulty through her whitened lips; "I cannot understand: is it you,

Jasper, who are talking to me; or am I crazed, or dreaming?"

"My poor darling, it is only a too miserable reality," Treherne replies most sadly, making a step forward with outstretched hands; but at his approach Reine shrinks away from him, and catching at a chair for support sinks into it, turning her face from him.

Cut to the heart, with lips bitten in his effort to preserve his self-control—to master the bitter pain which threatens to unman him, he walks away in silence to the window.

For indeed that gesture of abhorrence in contrast with years of innocent, childlike semi-idolatry, has half maddened him; he disdains in the face of this repulse to plead his own cause: the provocation received: the fact that Maxwell was the aggressor: that the blow would probably have been harmless enough but for the unlucky accident of his falling on the skate: that he (Treherne) might, had he chosen, have taken her at her word and kept silence altogether: if in her heart she can find no pity for him, he will not sue for mercy.

Human nature, with the help of time, accommodates itself to the heaviest, dreariest burthen, and Treherne's shoulders have accustomed them-

selves in a measure to his: he knows so well that Reine herself could scarcely be less guilty in intent than he, that he fails fully to realize the awful shock with which his revelation crashes into the even monotony of her simple, girlish existence; in his countless, mental rehearsals of the very scene he is enacting, the vision of Reine pitiless, unrelenting, has presented itself frequently to his mind, but only to be thrust into the background, by a fairer one, born of love and hope—a vision of a suffering, stricken, sorely-wounded little face indeed, yet with a divine forgiveness shining in the tender, sorrowful eyes.

But the reality is different to anything he has imagined; she neither cries, nor upbraids, nor pities him; she might be made of stone for all the outward sign she makes; and in her half-averted face, as he glances at it furtively, there is no relenting softness—only a fixed look of horror and unutterable despair.

As Treherne watches her, and remembers that this is his work, a great wave of remorseful tenderness surges up in his heart; he does not attempt to approach her, but he says brokenly, while his strong lips quiver:

"Reine, Reine, how often have you told me there was nothing you would not forgive me; were those quite empty words—the promises of which women are so prodigal, when there is no need of them?"

His appeal startles her out of her semi-stupor; hiding her face away from him on her folded arms, she murmurs almost inaudibly: "But this! I never dreamt of this!"

"You loved me in fair weather—in foul you turn away from me: you have not even common pity—the pity you would give to any erring, miserable wretch—for me; nothing but shrinking abhorrence; well! it is the way of the world," he says, with bitterest injustice.

"I loved a man incapable of deceit, of wrong-doing, of sin, of crime!" The last word is lost in a sob as it passes her tremulous lips.

"An impossible ideal; not a man at all; you do not know—few women do—what a thin line of demarcation often separates the veriest hero woman ever blindly worshipped from the abject criminal she loathes; an accident, a circumstance, a momentary impulse or temptation may suffice to send the best of us across the border."

"It may be so—I cannot tell—I cannot think," she returns, in the same laboured, un-

tuneful, unfamiliar voice; "but that you, whom, next to my dead father, I believed in, as the embodiment of all that is noble and good; on whom I pinned a faith which has become almost a creed to me—that you should be the one to cross that border—oh! Jasper, Jasper! that is bitter indeed! And I thought that I had tasted the last dregs of unhappiness when I lost *père!* that there was nothing more left for me to suffer! I could thank God now that he died without knowing this."

Treherne is silent under the sting of her bitter reproach, which yet seems less terrible to him than the preceding, unnatural calmness.

"Jasper, how could you bear to live with us—to take *père's* hand with this upon your conscience? And to think that it was to you I turned for counsel and consolation in my distress, in those dreadful days—when all the time your hand had—— oh! it is too horrible! In all this life that is before me in whom shall I ever believe again?"

In speaking she has raised her head, looking straight into his eyes like an accusing spirit; as she ends, it droops again upon her folded arms, with a gesture of shuddering aversion.

"If I had murdered the man treacherously, in

cold blood, because he was my rival, and I hated him, you could not think worse of me," asserts Treherne passionately.

"His blood is on your head."

"That is an exaggerated phrase; the two cases are very different, as you will admit when you are calmer—as indeed, any competent, unprejudiced person will tell you. If I knew myself to be the unmitigated scoundrel you seem to consider me, I should certainly not be pleading to you for forgiveness of an offence I should recognize as unforgivable. As for my having remained upon terms of friendship with yourself and your father, you must remember that the ties and associations of a life-time cannot be severed in a single day, and that the force of circumstances often compels a man to act in the interests of others, in a manner his judgment does not approve: I withheld the truth more for your sake than my own, Reine, believe me; though it is a fact that a man's secrets are his own, and a well-established principle that the worst of criminals is not bound to criminate himself. Had the law wreaked its worst vengeance upon me, I do not think I could have suffered more acutely than I have suffered since that fatal night. My first impulse, then, was to

go to the nearest magistrate and state the case to him in detail; but an intimate acquaintance with the intricate machinery of this same law, and some experience of the curious vagaries of british jurors, together with the knowledge that no human creature could confirm the truth of my statement, did not, upon maturer reflection, dispose me towards this course. I had no fancy, as you may imagine," adds Treherne, grimly cynical, "for running the gauntlet of the hangman, nor for passing the best years of my life in compulsory retirement; the law is a monster into whose jaws, I suppose, no man walks willingly; however, far above all these personal considerations was the desire to save you pain; believe it or not as you will—perhaps it is easier to believe me a craven-hearted, egotistical coward. The fact remains that you were the potent cause of my keeping silence—you and your father; I pictured to myself your grief and consternation; your humiliation and distress if affairs went badly, and the twelve intelligent Mudborough shop-keepers, in the absence of confirmatory evidence, took a wrong-headed view of the case. I had ascertained beyond all doubt that the poor fellow was dead; past all medical aid or skill; my endeavours to procure

assistance had been unavailing; and I felt sure that if I left him lying where he was, the natural conclusion would be that he had fallen accidentally, entangled among the branches in the ice, since no mortal eye witnessed our encounter. It was a curious accident, but curious accidents occur every day; everything happened exactly as I foresaw; no one for a moment doubted the wisdom of the verdict at the inquest, except Gregory the doctor, who stolidly maintained, in the face of the conceited ass of a coroner, and his twelve wise ones, that he could not satisfactorily account for the bruise behind the ear. Reine, if I have told you the whole wretched story, thus pitilessly, in detail, it is in the ardent hope that later, you may be enabled to sift out of the mass of misery and horror, many extenuating circumstances, which may move you to pity, even while you still condemn. What my life has been since that cursed night, tormented by self-reproach, distracted alternately by my love for you and a sense of my own unworthiness; unable to resist the temptation to be near you, which circumstances made so easy; maddened by the remembrance of the part I was playing, so that your sweet presence became my direst punishment, and my only resource was to fly from all

I loved best, leaving you to think me a heartless, conscience-less brute, or irresponsible madman—what my life has been, no words can describe; if, when you are calmer, you will judge me by what you knew of me in other days, you will understand, I think, that I have done something in the way of expiation, and learn to believe that to deceive you, Reine, has been to me the bitterest drop in a most bitter cup. All that is over now: all concealment is over between us; but I swear to you that if it will atone in your eyes, in the smallest degree, I am ready to go straight to England to-night, make full confession, and—take the consequences; a course I should naturally have adopted in the first place, had there been the remotest chance of suspicion resting upon any one else."

"For pity's sake—no," she cries, stretching out her hands imploringly; "not that—anything but that."

"Since you hate me, Reine, the rest matters very little," he answers wistfully.

"Not that—not that—but go—go now; I cannot bear any more."

"Go where?" he asks brokenly, wilfully misunderstanding; "into the next room—the garden—while you rest?"

"Go away—anywhere; only go—and for ever—I must be alone to think—go."

"You mean it, Reine? Think what you are doing; a fault, a crime if you will, committed unwittingly does not make a man wholly bad; do not banish me when you are so nearly alone in the world."

"Go—go;" is all she answers, and he does not guess that the cruel, hard ring in her voice is less the outcome of anger or aversion than the last effort of an overwrought mind to retain possession of its senses; pressing her hand to his lips before she is aware of his intention, he kisses it with a sort of reverence and—goes.

And before he is half-way down the snow-covered garden, Reine has fallen heavily to the ground, for the time-being oblivious of suffering and all mortal things.

CHAPTER IX.

> But I look'd, and round, all round the house I beheld
> The death-white curtain drawn.
>
> TENNYSON.

A PERIOD ensues in which Reine lies wan and prostrate in her white-curtained bed, while good Madame Roland tends her untiringly, and Jules moves with hushed footfall and melancholy countenance about the house, invoking the "*ciel*" energetically and demanding of it and others, whether these sausage-eating german doctors—these imbeciles—these inconceivable idiots—who permit a healthy young girl to slip through their clumsy fingers by slow degrees, making no effort to save her, can be possessed even of the first rudiments of medical science?

For the rotund, imperturbable man of medicine comes daily to the *châlet*, seeks in vain in Reine's vigorous young frame for the physical cause of this strange apathy, this unconquerable weakness, and failing entirely, takes refuge in that convenient professional resource—the nervous system.

"*Sehr stark angegriffen*" is the verdict of wisdom—quiet, absolute repose, no medicine, above all avoidance of anxiety of any kind—nature in time will do the rest. This is the small crumb of comfort the little man throws daily to Treherne, who knows better than any one else, that he has prescribed the one thing which to his patient is impossible.

Treherne lingers on in Baden in spite of irate communications from Hinton Challoner and summonses from Mr. McGrabbe; though Reine's "go" rings in his ears, he cannot go; in these days indeed he developes a capacity for romantic sentiment, at which he himself is now and then constrained to smile; he knows no repose away from the four walls which enclose his little suffering love, and if he starts for a walk, resolutely setting his face in the opposite direction, before many minutes have passed his eyes rest once again upon the darkened window behind which she lies.

One night, indeed, wandering Romeo-like in the frosty starlight, beneath the balcony of his "*angegriffen*" Juliet, a too-zealous member of the *Kaiserliche Polizei* imputes to him burglarious intentions, and is in the act of laying violent hands upon him when the wakeful

Therèse, attracted by the sound of voices, thrusts her classic, turbaned head out of the upper window, and in guttural accents volubly testifies to the spotless innocency of the captive.

In the evening of the day upon which Treherne had received sentence of banishment Jules had betaken himself in hot haste to the "Cour de Bade;" had recounted, with much gesticulation and multifarious interjections, how he had discovered his *chère demoiselle* lying unconscious upon the floor, how only the *Bon Dieu* himself knew how long she had lain there, since both Madame Roland and himself believed Monsieur to be with her; how he was distracted with grief at this fresh calamity, this strange seizure; he who hoped and believed that all would be well, if only Monsieur were once of return, whereas, on the contrary Mademoiselle was even in a more unhappy condition, than at the time of her father's death.

At this point in his story Jules had paused; then seeing that Treherne did not volunteer the explanation he was too respectful to solicit, had proceeded to inform him that a german doctor had been fetched—a clever one they said, though it was his (Jules') unalterable opinion, that no one belonging to that unhappy

nation was good for much, except perhaps for fighting purposes—and did not Monsieur think it would be well to send for a french doctor, perhaps from Strasburg for instance? To all of which Treherne had rather lamely replied, that Mademoiselle had been tried beyond her strength during the last few months; that rest and quiet would probably restore her more quickly to health than the united science of all the European nationalities; and Jules had retraced his steps, angry and disappointed at Treherne's apparent unconcern, and is only mollified, when as the days succeed each other slowly, bringing no change in Reine's condition, he notices how persistently Jasper haunts the *châlet*, how he hangs upon the sad, monotonous bulletin Madame Roland, moved by compassion, brings him from the sick-room; how plainly his hollow cheeks and the feverish unrest of his eyes tell of the unquiet spirit within.

Meanwhile Reine lies for the most part quietly, with closed eyes; but sometimes she grows light-headed for want of the nourishment she cannot take, and begins to wander, stretching out her arms to the irresponsive air, calling pitifully for Jasper, but more often for her father: Jean-Jacques sits through the long

days at her side, an anxious, care-worn look on his dignified, wise old face; now and then he licks the little burning hand which does not pat him any more, as it is tossed feverishly over the bed-side; and Coquin, subdued and quite sedate, lies curled up on the counterpane with a watchful brown eye open, on the alert to catch the faintest sign of recognition.

More than a week passes so; there come letters for Reine; one from Avignon, one in De Ferrières' hand-writing from Paris; Madame Roland brings them to Treherne, who, in his extremity decides to pen an epistle to the Vicomte, acquainting him with the fact of Reine's illness and his own consequent perplexity; asking him whether, in consideration of the girl's loneliness and critical condition, he thinks Madame de St. Cyr, to whom Mademoiselle is much attached, would consent to come to her, thereby performing a veritable act of charity and lifting an immense load of care from his shoulders.

To this Treherne receives an answer by return, from De Ferrières, in which his "*douleur*," his chagrin, his desolation, at the sad intelligence are set forth with characteristic vigour of expression; he adds that he can answer before-

hand for his sister's willingness to fly at once to Mademoiselle's assistance; that he departs instantly for Avignon to escort Madame de St. Cyr to Baden, who, equally with himself, will be desolated at the news of this misfortune.

And so it happens that Madame de St. Cyr, bent on her errand of mercy, crosses the frontier into the enemy's country, which she has not visited since the terrible experiences of '70; and Reine is vaguely conscious of her presence, which she accepts together with everything else as a matter of course, without comment; with that dreamy, apathetic listlessness which makes the despair of those who watch her.

De Ferrières is lodged in his old quarters at the pleasant "Cour de Bade," where at this season he and Treherne are pretty much lords of all they survey; and it comes to pass—as strange things do—that the acquaintance of these two men, who are so unlike, ripens into sincerest friendship, under the influence of a sorrow common to them both—for each loves Reine well after his own fashion.

Slowly the two great physicians, time and youth, win the girl back from greedy old death's chill clutches: many weeks pass before a happy day arrives upon which Jules takes the shadowy,

wasted, hollow-cheeked Reine in his strong arms and carries her downstairs, like a little child, into the *salon*. The phlegmatic doctor, concerning whose policy of "masterly inactivity," Monsieur Galette's sceptical brain has been visited by such dire misgivings, rubs his stumpy hands complacently as he superintends the operation, and after the manner of his kind, takes unto himself all the credit which is due to his patient's soundness of constitution: the snow and ice are all gone; happy twittering birds are busy in the trees, whose branches are tipped with amber buds, and tiny curling leaves:

> Daffodils
> That come before the swallows dare and take
> The winds of March with beauty; violets, dim,
> But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,

are in the woods and meadows when Reine, whiter than any white violet, struggles back painfully from the confines of that dark land whither she had almost wandered.

And all this time, in spite of remonstrances from Mr. McGrabbe and a continual succession of epistolary fireworks on the part of the Reverend Hinton, who twits him with an unbusiness-like dilatoriness in the execution of his late guardian's trust, Treherne clings persistently to Baden; for

he argues, if, which Heaven forbid! the worst should come, surely Reine will not leave him to live alone through all those long years, without that word of forgiveness for which his soul yearns; and if he cannot find rest away from her when she is well and strong, how much less when this terrible dread hangs over him!

So he stays on from week to week, receiving gratefully at the hands of Madame de St. Cyr such meagre consolation as it is in her power to bestow; from this compassionate lady, to whose womanly heart his unfeigned wretchedness strongly appeals, he learns by degrees that the little patient has at length recognized her, spoken clearly and coherently, has commenced to manifest a wholesome interest in every-day affairs: finally he hears with unspeakable gratitude that she is to be carried downstairs, and with a keen pang of bitterest disappointment, that she has of her own accord asked to see—De Ferrières.

"I confess," says Madame in confidence to her brother, "that Reine puzzles me more every day, she whom I imagined so frank—so artless! Three months ago she could think of no one but this young Englishman; his return was what she desired beyond everything in the world, and to-day she comes into the *salon* for the first time

and asks to see — not him — but you. *Mon Dieu!* but these young english girls are droll!"

"*Souvent femme varie,*" says De Ferrières smiling.

"And he is very well this Monsieur with the impossible name, for an Englishman especially," continues Madame magnanimously; "though a little formal, which is of course inevitable, he has quite the *bel air*; he is very good-looking, in the english style of course; he adores Reine, that is quite easy to see, and he is deplorably unhappy; I cannot understand how she can be so capricious; so fickle."

"*Souvent femme varie,*" he repeats with an amused smile; "it is also something quite new to find you so warm an advocate of Treherne's cause, Germaine."

"Ah! you laugh at me — well — yes, I confess I do pity that poor young man; when I recount his anxiety, his solicitude, to Reine she turns her head away; she does not answer; yesterday again when I remarked that he would rejoice to hear she was well enough to descend, so that he might be able to see her once again, she interrupted me quite angrily, begged she might never hear his

name mentioned and entreated me to urge him to quit Baden at once."

"*Amantium irae!*" says the Vicomte straying momentarily into the long-forgotten pastures of his latin grammar; "Mademoiselle is probably not in earnest, and would be much distressed if Treherne took her at her word and departed; for whatever may be the meaning of this strange freak, I am very certain it does not arise from insensibility to that young man's many attractions — which even you find irresistible, my sister."

Few days elapse before De Ferrières finds himself most unexpectedly enlightened regarding the origin of Reine's apparently incomprehensible caprice.

The two men are walking together in the forest; their conversation after one or two unsuccessful attempts at a wider range, has wandered back to Reine; the Vicomte is expressing for the twentieth time his perplexity and astonishment at her sudden severe illness following so quickly upon her complete recovery of health and spirits at Avignon.

"I can give you the key to the riddle;" says Treherne after some moments' silence: "but on condition that you promise me on your word of

honour to keep my secret religiously whatever its nature may be."

"That of course;" returns De Ferrières looking with mild astonishment into his companion's face, wondering whether much anxiety can have slightly unhinged this usually practical young man's well-balanced brain: "but let me advise you, my friend, to reflect well, before you allow a secret of any importance to pass out of your own safe keeping."

"I have reflected: the result of my reflections is the conviction that your sound common sense would be of inestimable service to me in assisting to unravel the tangled mass of conflicting thoughts, doubts and sophistical cobwebs which distracts me; a man is naturally prone to see things as he wishes them to be; and constantly dwelling on one and the same topic is apt to interfere with one's clearness of vision: one of our legal bigwigs used to maintain I believe that an element of madness lurked in every confession; perhaps I am mad; God knows I have had more than enough to make me so: in any case De Ferrières, I have determined to make a clean breast of it to you."

Upon this Treherne tells the whole story with

straightforward simplicity; to De Ferrières he can naturally speak quite unreservedly with regard to Maxwell; he admits his dislike of the man, his disappointment and unconquerable jealousy on hearing of the engagement, his belief that in marrying him Reine was preparing for herself life-long misery in the future; and concludes with a circumstantial account of the fatal encounter.

"On my solemn oath he struck the first blow;" finishes Treherne emphatically; "after having aggravated me to such a pitch of exasperation that my fingers itched to horsewhip him, I admit: but I refrained for Reine's sake: I am not a good-tempered fellow at best; he struck me: I gave blow for blow: except for the position of that cursed skate, which I have explained to you, it would have been no more than an ordinary, fair, stand-up fight, such as we Englishmen regard as in no sense derogatory, and in which the advantage would have been with me, as the person attacked, not attacking. I hated the fellow, I loathed the idea of his marrying Reine; I would almost rather have seen her in her coffin—but I swear to you that I had no more idea of injuring him, than I have of killing you at this moment: this is what I want you to believe, De Ferrières."

"I do believe it;" says the Vicomte readily, who has listened to the recital in silence with the deepest attention.

"All this I have told to Reine; in the position in which Challoner's will places me how could I do otherwise? You have now the clue to the mystery. This is the cause of the poor child's illness, of her detestation of me, of her refusal to see me, and I am the most miserable devil under the sun, for she believes me to be nothing less than a murderer."

"She will modify that opinion by-and-by, *mon ami;* in the meantime try to realize what such a revelation must have been to her—concerning a man too of whom she had made a sort of hero;—ever since I have known Mademoiselle, that engagement has been an enigma to me."

"Reine I suppose was flattered at the preference Maxwell showed for her; she lived so much alone with her father that she really knew very little about love, marriage and all those topics in which the interest of most girls centres; but, much as I loved Challoner and revere his memory I shall always think that in this matter he was most culpably negligent; and by God! I am glad I helped to kill the fellow if there were no other way of saving Reine from such a fate."

"It is a most unfortunate affair;" says De Ferrières gravely; "secure as you were in the knowledge of your own innocency of intention, would it not have been wiser to have faced the worst at once, ventilated all the circumstances thoroughly and so set the matter at rest for ever! For my part I would rather face twenty day-light dangers than have one hanging over my head in the dark."

"You see, De Ferrières, with us it is the law's business to prove a man guilty: my first impulse was to tell the whole truth; my second, seeing that no amount of confessions could bring the dead man to life again, was to let things take their course, so long as suspicion fell upon nobody else: there was not a creature who could corroborate my evidence and all the innocence in the world will not prevent a jury sometimes taking an erroneous view of a case; no twelve sane men I suppose would have convicted me of murder, but manslaughter is an ugly word too, and an ugly penalty is attached to it; I can imagine it might have proved a difficult task to convince twelve pig-headed Britishers that Maxwell's death was the result of pure accident, on the representations of an individual, who they would naturally conclude had the very strongest reasons for perjuring

himself; but my chief concern was for Reine and her father; I thought of all they must endure if I elected to thrust myself into this unenviable notoriety, which on the other hand could benefit no one: of course I meant to go away, to part from Reine for ever, but it is not easy to cast the best part of one's life adrift at a moment's notice; still I might have found the moral courage to carry out my plan had I not that very night—the night of Maxwell's death—discovered that Reine loved me—curious irony of fate! not Maxwell after all; this knowledge unmanned me; I stayed like a fool and by my idiotic vacillation gave Challoner time and opportunity to discover the real state of the case: he put the finishing stroke to my dilemma when he appointed me Reine's guardian—do you understand now how it is, that all these wheels within wheels have obliged me to tell her the truth?"

"Which you never thought of withholding and still possessing yourself of the legacy Challoner undoubtedly intended for your own?"

"Oh! yes—I did;" Treherne responds naïvely; "I looked at the matter in every possible light; I tried to cheat myself—all to no purpose; another woman, less guileless, I might have deceived; Reine never: and now as I told her, I

am ready to cry out the whole story from the roof of St. Paul's if by so doing I can make atonement in her eyes; they may hang me, or transport me, or set me oakum picking: it is all one and the same to me now; since Reine hates me and has parted us for ever."

"This is the language of a man who is unnerved and unstrung by much suffering and anxiety—Mademoiselle does not hate you at all, *voyons*; it is not so easy to hate those we have once loved because we happen to discover a weak point in their armour, any more than it is easy to love unlovable people distractedly because of their resplendent virtues."

"She has banished me past recall," says Treherne dismally; "if you could only have seen how she shrank from me absolutely in horror."

"Naturally enough: remember that Mademoiselle probably regards evil of all description as something apart—the monopoly of a small minority of outcasts with whom so-called respectable people have no affinity at all: this is an entirely new experience which for the moment will revolutionize all her pre-conceived ideas—wait till order is restored and she will do you justice. Mademoiselle is too young to have learnt already that men and women too, may commit many

foolish, undesirable actions, yet still preserve all their noblest qualities intact; for the rest, *mon cher*, believe me, a woman very seldom banishes a man she cares about—past recall."

"I will go away, for a time at any rate, now she is out of danger."

"There you are wise I think;" agrees De Ferrières, reflectively; "when you are gone there will come a reaction, when Mademoiselle will relent or at least cease to magnify and exaggerate; and now I am curious to know your motive in telling me all this; how do you know I shall not telegraph to your Scotland Yard to-night?"

"I have your word of honour—but if you did it would not matter much—I have told you all this—well—partly I think from a weak craving for human sympathy, which all poor devils experience more or less I suppose, especially when their devilry has not prospered very well; and partly because—I—I wished to say something to you De Ferrières, which you might consider an unpardonable impertinence, unless you knew all the ins and outs of this wretched complication."

"Which translated into plain english means—what, Treherne?"

"This;" he answers, stopping and facing De Ferrières, "I will be quite frank with you: I believe you have immense influence with Reine; she banishes me; I have no choice but to go; do not be offended De Ferrières at what I am going to say: promise me for the present to remain perfectly neutral."

"My dear fellow you are not quite frank;" returns the Vicomte, smiling; "what you intended to say is this; and had you said it you would not have disturbed my equanimity in the least: 'I am going away; I trust to time and the remembrance of years of affection and sympathy to right me, if only they are allowed fair play; promise me not to try to usurp the place which has been mine:' you may be quite tranquil; however much I tried, I should never succeed: Mademoiselle looks upon me as a grandfather pure and simple."

"But you?" says Treherne, unable to repress a smile.

"I—oh! well had I the happiness to possess a grand-daughter, I should probably *not* feel quite the interest in her, which I feel in Miss Challoner; this I confess; indeed as plain-speaking is the order of the day, I will go a step farther and admit that but for the fact of your

existence I might have permitted myself to hope —*enfin*—a man of fifty, who permits himself to hope where a beautiful young girl is concerned, looks to a young fellow under thirty, naturally very much like a doting old fool: *du reste*, I think it is always difficult for an Englishman to imagine a Frenchman capable of any legitimate sentiment of romance, or to believe it possible that he might contemplate any marriage but one of convenience."

"You are mistaken; for the last year you and von Waldeck have been my two familiar nightmares."

"I understand the latter, *parbleu!* he is really a formidable rival; young, handsome, talented; with almost a genius for music for which Mademoiselle has a veritable *culte;* and then, too, he is quite free from that hectoring, overbearing manner which makes one long to exterminate the ordinary Prussian and all his race — but no; Mademoiselle is not of the 'girouette' type, unhappily perhaps for her."

"And he has in addition an immaculate past which Reine will be for ever contrasting with mine;" groans Treherne, stung by jealous torments.

"Is it not just a little what you english call like a dog in the manger, this desire to debar Made-

moiselle from seeking happiness elsewhere, after having brought her yourself so much unhappiness?"

"I dare say it is; but which of us is capable of this refinement of unselfishness? At twenty-eight hope is not easily strangled; I cling to the belief of Reine's forgiveness, I only ask that her affection may be left free from other influences, to plead for me; if in the end she decides that I have sinned past forgiveness, that the devotion of a life-time cannot wash out that one stain, I can only accept the hard fate I suppose all right-thinking people will agree I have deserved. You will probably think me a vain self-sufficient coxcomb, De Ferrières, if I confess to you that some instinct tells me, in spite of all this wretched business, that I could make Reine happier than any other man;" Treherne adds hastily, while his dark face flushes, for indeed, this confidential expansiveness is a novel and not altogether agreeable experience, to one of his reticent, undemonstrative nature.

"A long and exhaustive study of feminine character disposes me to the same conclusion; that is the reason I say—wait—have patience: what will a woman not forgive a man she loves? To what heights of self-abnegation, devotion, endurance, is she not capable of soaring for his sake."

"But is a man justified in accepting that self-abnegation?" asks Treherne very earnestly; "I have pondered so long upon this point that I am afraid I may be afflicted with a sort of moral obliquity of vision concerning it. Reine is so alone in the world I cannot bear to leave her; yet have I any right even were she ever so willing, to let her link her life with mine? Answer me frankly."

There is a pause of some minutes; then De Ferrières says slowly; "It is a difficult point; but believing your statement as I do implicitly, I think no sensible man could hold you bound to sacrifice the happiness of two lives for the sake of an unfortunate accident; the main question however, it is for Miss Challoner to determine, and this she can only do alone; since her consulting any one else would involve a betrayal of your secret."

"It seems to me you are right; but when one has a thing much at heart, it is so easy to find cogent reasons to fit one's theories; in any case there is nothing for it but as you say—to wait.

"My advice must be sound I think;" says De Ferrières with a sigh; "it is so disinterested."

As he speaks they leave the forest and begin to descend the slopes leading to the town; they are half-way along the Lichtenthaler Allée when Treherne says rather irrelevantly, but moved by

uneasy jealousy speaking the thought which just then is uppermost in his mind: "The office of friend and counsellor to a girl in whom one is interested, proves a difficult one sometimes, De Ferrières."

"I have found it so more than once;" returns his companion a little stiffly, "but fortunately as a rule I have also found my perception of honour sufficiently clear to tide me over any difficulties that may have arisen."

"I did not mean to annoy you, De Ferrières, but you see when a fellow is living in a particular little hell of his own he does not stop to choose his words; I have bored you sufficiently I think; I will go and put my traps together and be off by the mail train to-night."

"Believe me, *mon ami*," says De Ferrières as the two shake hands warmly; "you yourself are not more anxious for Mademoiselle's happiness than I; for the rest you may carry away with you the comforting assurance that your interests are as safe in my hands as though Miss Challoner were your wife already."

And Treherne goes on his way comforted; believing these last words to the letter: though they are spoken by a godless, commandment-shattering "foreigner."

CHAPTER X.

Ich glaub' am Ende brach ich eine Lilje
Die gab ich ihr und sprach ganz laut dabei:
"Heirathe mich und sei mein Weib, Ottilje,
Damit ich fromm wie du und glücklich sei."

HEINE.

AT twenty, one must be constitutionally very unsound if grief is to kill one, or even to leave any permanent and abiding mark of its presence.

With the bright spring time health returns to Reine; her step grows elastic, her white cheeks softly round again, bright with their old roses; the strong young body has carried the sensitive spirit well through its ordeal: it is only those who know her well and watch her closely, who realize how much of the former radiant sunniness has departed; casual observers remark how wonderfully Miss Challoner has recovered from her severe illness—how completely she seems to have "got over" her father's death.

May comes and Baden is once more ablaze with many-shaded blossom and tender green foliage: De Ferrières comes and goes after his erratic

fashion, but Madame De St. Cyr, won over by the beauty of the enemy's country and the pleasant, simple life, has declared her readiness to pass the summer months at the *châlet* if Reine desires it.

Of Treherne nothing is heard; for the excellent reason that the small despot who reigns supreme, peremptorily forbids the mention of his name; Madame becomes aware that a certain photograph of this cruelly-treated young man, is deposed from its post of honour, the first day Reine comes downstairs, and going into the girl's room late one night, she perceives the presentment of the disgraced one lying at the bedside, and large tear-drops glistening on the dark curled lashes of the sleeper.

But De Ferrières, like the good Samaritan he is, pours balm upon the wounded spirit of the poor exile, keeping him informed as to the progress of Reine's convalescence, though he can tell him nothing as to the prospect of his ultimate rehabilitation in her good graces, by reason of the before-referred to autocratic decree of this resolute little personage; neither does he think it necessary to inform the love-lorn delinquent beyond seas, that von Waldeck is a constant visitor at the *châlet*, where he is always made welcome; not only by its pretty hostess, but by

Madame de St. Cyr herself; who, subjugated by the tuneful melody of this young martial Apollo, has forgiven him his nationality, and—so her brother laughingly declares—basely deserted to the enemy.

But these musical communings to which Reine turns in these sad days, as a distraction from sorrowful thoughts, have, more than ever, a widely different and deeper meaning for von Waldeck. One evening when Madame de St. Cyr chances to be absent, Reine, by particular desire, sings one of the beautiful songs which Lassen has wedded so melodiously to Heine's words—and sings it moreover with such "*innere Empfindung*," as the composer has decreed, that under the spell of her sympathetic voice, the enthusiastic young man's feelings break away from the adagio stage in which they have been held so long in check, and rush up with one bound to *prestissimo molto*.

Reine's hands fall into her lap as she finishes singing, and says, with a long-drawn sigh, more to herself than to him, in ungrateful, semi-oblivion of his presence—

"I think my idea of heaven would be a place in which Bülow and Joachim played Beethoven,

alternating with some others all day long, and where a tuneful choir sang songs of Schubert's, Rubinstein's and Lassen's to the accompaniment of a five-stringed Blüthner piano."

"My idea of heaven is—any place where you are—*Fraülein*," says Max, in a low voice, with true Teutonic sentiment, while his heart bumps about like a bar of dotted quavers.

Reine knows the hour is come, and there is no escape; in a few words, at which anglo-saxon undemonstrativeness might choose to sneer, as bordering too closely on the high-flown romantic, but which are in nowise ridiculous, seeing that they come straight from his heart, Max tells her how he has loved her for many months in silence; how, in the first instance, he dared not speak, feeling, says this odd specimen of male humanity, that he was not made to be liked at first sight, but only indeed (perhaps) after long acquaintance; secondly, he refers to the sad events which have intervened; and then he takes her hand in his, and with the recklessness incidental to his enfeebled mental condition, proceeds to lay all his worldly possessions at her feet—*i.e.*, his hand, his heart, his violin, his medals, a goodly collection of pipes and beer

tankards, an acre or two of music, and the princely stipend he receives at the hands of a grateful country.

Reine listens with an absence of emotion concerning which she cannot help philosophizing even while Strephon is sighing in doubt at her side; it seems to her that she has grown perfectly callous and passionless, as she turns, and with clear, frank eyes, which neither falter nor grow shy, looks straight into the impassioned, troubled face of the much-perturbed young man.

As he stands before her pleading his cause so earnestly in the soft, half light,

> With a perfect face
> Of fresh young beauty, clustered curls divine
> And chiselled features like a sculptured God,

veracious history is constrained to admit that for the space of two minutes Reine wavers—not in her allegiance to Treherne, but in her determination to sacrifice her whole life to the remembrance of that one love which has been so cruelly deceived. Can any mortal creature hope to seize the veritable substance of happiness? It failing, were it not wiser to grasp even its shadow and be thankful? Here is a man possessed of

every desirable qualification, except the all-important one (without which the rest are worthless indeed) of being the *right* man; he loves her, they have many tastes in common; at the sound of his footstep her heart will never beat as at Treherne's coming; but for that very reason shall she not listen to his suit, seeing that he will have less power to make her suffer?

Rapidly her imagination conjures up the possibility of a peaceful existence of emotionless stagnation, in which love, with its inseparable cruelties, has no part, which surely must be preferable to this aching sense of desolate loneliness;—an existence in which she and Max shall sail placidly down life's stream together, he adoring, she suffering herself to be adored, in calm, unbroken monotony, which by reason of a certain affinity of mind, shall bring her in time, not only peace and contentment, but even a dim, passive, twilight shade of happiness.

In less time than it takes to record them, and before von Waldeck has ended his discourse, plentifully interspersed with emotional adjectives, Reine's doubts and vacillations are over; she decides that she has no right to do this wrong to honest Max; she recalls Treherne's warning words upon this very subject, and by

their aid she recognizes the great truth a modern poet has so well expressed—

> Worse it is to live
> Ill mated than imperfect and to move
> From a false centre not a perfect sphere
> But with a crooked bias sent oblique
> Athwart life's furrows.

"Herr Lieutenant, it grieves me to pain you, believe me, but indeed it can never be," she says, in a voice whose quiet decision carries conviction with it; yet von Waldeck hoping against hope rejoins quickly—

"Do not say never, *Fräulein*, I implore you; I understand that you should not care for me yet, — but — I am ordered to Berlin for six months and I could not leave without asking you, to give me the hope that you might learn to like me a little some day."

"I like you very much now," answers Reine touched, as every woman is when a man looks miserable for her sake; "but nevertheless I must still say it can never be."

Max's face falls as all his pleasant day-dreams vanish into air.

"If you are good enough to like me a little already," he says hesitatingly, conscious that he is treading on dangerous ground, "there can I

think be only one reason why you should refuse me permission to hope that you might one day like me better: another is more fortunate than I, is it not so, *Fräulein?*"

It is Reine's turn now to hesitate, for how shall she explain? He glances at her tell-tale face for an instant and continues: "When I was badly wounded in '70, I said to the surgeon who was seeking for the bullet: do not, in mistaken kindness, beat about the bush; hurt me if you will, but let it be done and over quickly—*Fräulein*, may I say the same to you?"

"It is as you think. I—I am not free," she stammers confusedly; then seeing how much the confession hurts him, she adds in gentle apology: "But this happened before I knew you—it has been always so I think, though once I did not know it; you will understand now why I say 'it can never be,' and forgive me for paining you."

"*Ach! so-o-o,*" says Max, battling bravely with his disappointment, as his last lingering vestige of hope fades into nothingness; for an instant he looks surprised—then enlightened—repeats the inevitable "*Ach! so-o-o,*" meditatively, and adds: "There is nothing for me to forgive, *mein Fräulein;* it is I, rather, who should ask your

forgiveness for having proved myself a very vain, blind idiot. And now I will say good-bye, for I leave early to-morrow for Berlin — *adieu, Fräulein Reine*—it is, I fear, no longer *auf Wiedersehen!*"

He takes her hand and presses a kiss upon it which Treherne himself might have contemplated without feeling aggrieved; then he goes without another word through the open window, down the familiar garden-path; at the bridge he turns, but fortunately he cannot through the dusky twilight see Reine, who has buried her face in her hands under the rose-covered verandah and for some inscrutable feminine reason is crying bitterly.

Long years hence when von Waldeck shall have taken unto his bosom an aboriginal *gnädige Frau* of ample, ever-increasing proportions, who shall have made him the proud father of an indefinite number of towy-haired embryo-soldiers, how often, as he sits looking out over the blue waters of old Father Rhine, smoking endless pipes, will he recall that brief, sweet Baden idyll; when he lost the heart of his youth, the like of which he never found again to present to his stalwart partner!

The summer passes away tranquilly: Reine's

little household presents the curious phenomenon of three of the gentler sex living under one roof without quarrelling; perhaps the secret of this unique state of affairs lies in the absence of the disturbing masculine element.

Late in the summer, however, De Ferrières reappears in Baden: he comes upon Reine unexpectedly sitting in the old place under the catalpa tree; Jean-Jacques recognizes the well-known step as it comes along the *Allée* and rushes over the bridge, barking joyously.

"And where have you come from," inquires Reine when greetings are exchanged.

"This time Mademoiselle I come from the land of liberty—the land which rules the waves: do I not smell of Free Trade—Progress—Reform—Enlightenment—Peace with Honour—does not the shadow of Mrs. Grundy's mantle hang about me—do you not perceive an increased stiffness in the vertebral region?"

"When did you leave?" she asks smiling, but leaving the Vicomte's flowery tirade unanswered.

"On Saturday night; the invariable date of my departure from that centre of civilization; I was two days in Paris, and then the spirit moved me to come and see how you and Germaine were getting on."

"We are flourishing peaceably."

"And von Waldeck—how is he?"

"He is gone—to Berlin."

"Zo-o-o! as he would remark; Mademoiselle Reine, why do you exhibit those symptoms of emotion, as the novelists say—and wherefore do you attempt to tie Jean-Jacques' ears into a knot for which the material supplied by nature is insufficient?"

Reine has grown as scarlet as the pomegranate blossoms on the balcony, and as De Ferrières speaks Jean-Jacques makes protest by a squeak, against her cruelties.

"Because your prophecy has come true, and I know by instinct you will utter that most exasperating phrase, 'I told you so,' before five minutes are over," she answers, comforting the aggrieved philosopher with a hug of atonement.

"He has told you—the old story?"

"Yes—unfortunately!"

"Why unfortunately?"

"Because I have lost a friend and an excellent music master."

"Then you have been sufficiently punished; I will spare you the dreaded, 'I told you so;' but indeed it was not very difficult to see that it must come to this eventually; given certain

quantities of youth, beauty, similarity of tastes and sentiments—or even certain piquant dissimilarities, add opportunity and propinquity;—there is a certain sameness about the result which accounts for my gift of prophecy."

"You know I am not a convert to this theory of universal inflammability," returns Reine with a laugh.

"Because you are inoculated with a subtle species of psychical vaccine which renders you impervious to these disturbing influences."

"That is a theory altogether too profound for the feminine mind to grasp," she says while her cheeks again put on their signals of distress.

"Is it indiscreet to inquire what answer you returned to von Waldeck?"

"I think you can reply to that question yourself, Vicomte," she rejoins hurriedly with a swift glance of reproach. "You often credit me with virtues I do not possess; are you trying to balance the account by ignoring the few that are really mine? variableness at least cannot be laid to my charge, I hope."

De Ferrières gazes in pensive innocence up at the blue sky and warbles gently and appropriately, "*La donna e mobile.*"

"Fit music for such a theme," cries Reine laughing yet provoked at his assumed scepticism; "Vicomte, if you persist in distracting me with that jingling tune, which always seems to me to out-*Verdi Verdi*, I shall take the liberty of wishing you a very good morning."

She rises, makes him a deep reverence, and with a mock air of offended dignity turns towards the house.

"Mademoiselle!" cries De Ferrières penitently, "I entreat you to return; how inhospitable, how cruel! when I have journeyed hundreds of miles to see you! Only remain, and not another note of Verdi's shall pass my lips as long as I live. Stay—and I will sing you 'The Flying Dutchman' from beginning to end; if you will permit me to borrow little Jules's trumpet and drum, and a casserole or two and the tongs from Therèse by way of orchestra, I will give you a complete Wagnerian masterpiece."

"The *rôle* of the erratic Dutchman would suit you to perfection," says Reine, relenting at this enchanting prospect; "here one day, there another, at Timbuctoo the next."

"*Figaro quà—Figaro là—Oh! pardon!* I am transgressing again; I suppose Rossini is also tabooed, Mademoiselle."

"I never knew you so overflowing with melody; have you been making your *début* at Covent Graden as primo tenore?"

"*A la bonne heure!* now you have it; but of course you saw the critique in the *Hornet?* No? well, that is a pity: the oracle was good enough to declare that when I had overcome the nervousness incidental to extreme youth; mastered the rudiments of my profession, altered my entire method and style, and unlearnt all that I had previously learnt, I might, provided I practised unceasingly, in time become a very promising young singer——My little friend," he adds, becoming suddenly grave; "the reason I am so light-hearted is that I am so enchanted to see you so well again: so bright, so much your old self."

"One cannot sigh and cry for ever I suppose," says Reine apologetically.

"Not even the least variable people I assure you, Mademoiselle."

"Sometimes I feel as if it were treason to *père*'s memory, when in spite of myself the blue sky, the birds, the woods and mountains make me feel so glad."

"It is no treason — only natural; and just as he more than any one would wish it to be,"

returns the Vicomte gently, seeing that her eyes have filled with tears.

There is silence for a few moments; then Reine says, turning her head away:

"You did not see Hinton Challoner in England?"

"No, Mademoiselle, I had not that pleasure." Silence again; then slowly with hesitation:

"Did you see any one—I—know?"

"Only one individual whose name I am forbidden to mention—an individual, however, who showed no disinclination to speak of you, and who profited by the occasion to ask much and anxiously after you," answers De Ferrières conscientiously.

"He—he—is—well?"

"Oh yes; at his age with a physique such as his, it is difficult to be anything but well; you would not wish him to be wasting in despair, dying because a woman's fair; what does your English poet say; something to that effect, is it not?"

"I think suffering is so unjustly proportioned," she returns evasively; "women have such an unfair share."

"The individual in question owes you nothing in the matter of suffering, believe me."

"What is he doing?"

"What we are all doing; existing, breathing, eating, sleeping, hoping, regretting."

"He has his profession; he can at least work; that is the one privilege I envy men, out of the numbers they have."

"Sitting in dingy chambers waiting for work which does not come cannot be a very invigorating moral tonic," remarks De Ferrières, sniffing at a catalpa blossom which hangs within reach of his patrician nose.

"Vicomte, do you remember a history you told me once about that picture in your room in Paris?"

"Perfectly."

"May I ask you a question about it?"

"But yes; of course; why not? If my little maladies of the heart can serve to point a moral, dissect them; experimentalize upon them as you will."

"After she deceived you—did you still love her," asks Reine with shy hesitation.

"For a long time—yes."

"Although she had deserted you heartlessly and married your friend?"

"Yes, I blush to repeat it; such was the feebleness of my intellect," replies De Ferrières,

lowering his eyes with a mock air of intense gravity; "I even continued to love the friend who robbed me of my beloved, until he developed into such a pedantic, button-holeing bore, that it was impossible to tolerate him any longer! Yet even now I cherish a species of secret, tender gratitude towards his memory."

"And how were you cured of loving *her?*" inquires Reine eagerly.

"By absence—time—and—somebody else."

"Is there any subject upon which you can be serious?" she cries, turning away with a little petulant movement.

"I am sober as a judge: there is nothing women find so difficult of belief sometimes as the plain truth."

"You loved another woman and so forgot *her?*" she says, rather aghast; uninstructed as she is concerning the polygamous proclivities of man.

"*Prbaleu!* many others," returns De Ferrières with a burst of sincerity; "it is only women who are capable of making one love last a life-time, and these acts of female heroism become rarer in every decade."

"Then how is it you are not married?" she asks, looking straight into the Vicomte's amused

eyes as she delivers herself of this embarrassing question.

"I have been miraculously preserved: perhaps no one liked me well enough to take me for better or worse."

"Perhaps you did not ask any one."

"Very likely not, after my first experience; a man you know may be on the verge of despair, he will still think twice before he commits suicide."

"If your first love had not married some one else, would you have forgiven her deception and married her?" queries Reine, knitting her brows over this abstruse problem.

"That proposition is a little involved, Mademoiselle," he answers, much amused at this severe cross-examination, comprehending perfectly whither it is tending; "the deception consisted in the marriage; I could not very well testify my forgiveness by marrying the wife of the man for whose sake I had been jilted."

"I mean if you had been deceived in any other way—would you have forgiven her?"

"At fifty I cannot answer for what I might have been fool enough—or wise enough—to do at twenty-five."

Blushing scarlet, and with a sort of despera-

tion, Reine says hurriedly: "Let us take an imaginary case; a girl loves a man whom she believes in and trusts implicitly; all at once she discovers that he has cruelly deceived her; that he has been guilty of acts which, in most people's eyes, nothing could excuse: can anything justify her in loving him still?"

"Supposing marriage to be a desirable thing it is fortunate for us that all women are not imbued with these extreme Spartan opinions."

"You mean that a woman may still love a man who has proved himself unworthy, and yet lose nothing of her own self-respect?" she asks, with strange eagerness, seeing that De Ferrières' reply, if affirmative, must tend rather to refute than support her own view of the question.

"Much must depend, naturally, on the nature of the fault, folly, error, or whatever it may be, of which this imaginary individual has been guilty: as a rule, your sex, especially before marriage, is so overflowing with charity and the milk of human kindness towards ours, that it is not easy to be unworthy; there is so little the dear creatures will not forgive us; usually when a woman begins to find flaws in her idol, it is a sure sign her idolatry is tottering; if she

loves him she can no more school herself into indifference at will, than you, with all the deftness of your pretty fingers, can manufacture a twin blossom to this catalpa flower—always supposing him, of course, to be nothing very exceptional in the way of naughtiness."

It is difficult to doubt the wisdom of one's conclusions when a second person, by a separate and circuitous route arrives precisely at the same point; for this reason Reine is immensely impressed by De Ferrières' arguments, embodying as they do a conviction towards which she has been slowly and painfully struggling for many months.

"A woman may not be able to help loving some one who has deceived her, but at least she can help letting him know it," she says, with a last faint attempt at the heroic.

"Certainly—if the seas divide them," agrees De Ferrières cheerfully.

"You think she may forgive him almost anything; do you really mean that?" she asks again wistfully.

"Not quite; but," he adds with sudden gravity, "I think, before casting this fictional 'him' adrift, a woman should convince herself that she is not inflicting a punishment dispro-

portionate to the offence; she should be persuaded that his wrong-doing is the outcome of innate wickedness, of vicious principle, not the result of hasty impulse, under circumstances of unforeseen temptation—one fault—a grave one perhaps—to be bitterly repented through a lifetime; of all this a woman who loves a man truly would or should assure herself by the most positive proofs, before she took upon her shoulders the responsibility of pushing him farther down that hill which we all know is so easy of descent: you may laugh perhaps, and think 'the Devil can cite Scripture for his purpose;' but 'judge not' has always appeared to me an excellent social as well as religious maxim; if people observed it a little more strictly, this world would I fancy be a pleasanter one to live in. And now, Mademoiselle, I think we have indulged in semi-metaphysical argument sufficiently for one day; let dull care be gone; put on your smiles again, for I see Germaine and Madame Roland coming along the *Allée*."

Reine looks questioningly in De Ferrières' face as he finishes speaking; but he is gazing innocently at the two ladies as they approach through

the trees and she sees nothing to confirm her suspicion that he is possessed of Treherne's secret, and that this knowledge has inspired his strangely significant words.

In two minutes the Vicomte is chattering and laughing with his sister and Madame Roland as gaily as though he had never been grave in his life.

But later, when he is alone, he ponders thoughtfully over his conversation with Reine; that she loves Treherne still, in spite of all that has happened, that she is more than halfway on the road to complete forgiveness is very patent to him indeed; whether he is justified in aiding this fair, pure young life, even for the sake of its own peace, to mate with one in which there is avowedly a leaf turned down, is a problem which, in Reine's immediate vicinity, he never succeeds in solving quite to his own satifaction; he wanders into a labyrinth of argument for and against, and finally consoles himself with the reflection that Reine is of age and responsible to no one; therefore possessed of the right to dispose of her life as she may think fit.

"It must be all right, *sapristi*," he argues as he smokes a late cigar in the pleasant gardens of the hotel; "for I can conceive nothing more detestable to me personally than helping the

child to tie herself irrevocably to somebody else; and through all ages that which is disagreeable, has been, is, and will be, that which is right."

Through the long months which have intervened since Treherne and Reine parted, the girl's brain has indeed been a chaos of doubts, perplexities and conflicting feelings. At first the sense of cruel disappointment, the overthrow of trust and belief in one whose uprightness and honour had been almost articles of faith with her, paralyzed her sense of justice, held her reasoning faculties in abeyance, and drove her for the time being to the other extreme of bitterest hatred and distrust.

As she lay wounded in spirit, her body even crushed by this last blow, longing to die, to go "anywhere, anywhere out of the world"—after the manner of the very young, who clamour for happiness as a right, and have not mastered the fact that joy represents the rare plums in life, not the every-day commonplace leaven—her great love seemed to her a personal shame and humiliation; she has given it unasked, unsought, she tells herself in bitter, unjust self-reproach, and this is its meet reward.

It is while she is a prey to these feelings while her mind is still stunned by the shock of

Treherne's revelation, and is in addition oppressed by intolerable physical weakness, that Reine forbids the mention of his name, and reiterates his sentence of banishment.

No sooner has health begun to return, chasing morbid fancies away, leaving clear perception full play, than love and pity begin to plead the disowned one's cause with all their might and eloquence, until the longing for his presence, the sense of loneliness and isolation become almost unendurable.

"Oh! if I had only *père* I could have borne it all," she moans to that discreet confidant Jean-Jacques, as they sit together in the woods through the long summer days, while the happy birds carol in the branches and the tall pines overhead tell each other their interminable secrets.

But it is only to this privileged, four-footed friend the girl thus unbends; to Madame de St. Cyr, although a sincere affection exists between them, she says nothing of her sorrows; outwardly she is cheerful, even gay, as time wears on and the elasticity of youth asserts itself; but at heart she is lonely with the worst form of loneliness; that which has known happier days; for when did friendship at its best, suffice to fill the void that love has left?

Though the knowledge that Maxwell has come by his death at the hands of Treherne is still inexpressibly terrible to her, she has learnt to reason calmly on the subject, to take into consideration the provocation received, to estimate at its full value the all-important fact that Sir Angus was the aggressor, to recognize how prominent a part was played by accident throughout: sometimes in sheer despair at the weariness of existence she finds herself wishing that Treherne had kept his own counsel; judging him, by the light of her own suffering, she realizes the magnitude of the temptation he has overcome, when, for honour's sake, he elected to speak the words which might part them for ever.

Reine, indeed, passes through every phase of feeling, from deadliest, sickening horror, to a desire for reconciliation so intense that she has determined if possible to end this state of miserable suspense; her conversation with De Ferrières is the outcome of this resolve, for she is diffident as to the entire wisdom of a resolution arrived at without the assistance of a counsellor older and wiser than herself: she does not guess how little her "imaginary case" imposes on him; still less, what it costs him to advise her as he does: his argument presents the matter under

another aspect, and one to which in her present frame of mind she willingly gives full weight; putting personal consideration out of the question, has she the right for one fault—however grave—to make a shipwreck of Treherne's life?

Her heart answers the query even while De Ferrières is speaking, but how to re-open negotiations with the banished culprit, who, she well knows, is as proud as Lucifer and about as likely as that gentleman to sue for mercy a second time, is the problem which occupies Reine's thoughts for many days.

CHAPTER XI.

Ask me no more, thy fate and mine are seal'd:
I strove against the stream and all in vain:
Let the great river take me to the main:
No more dear love for at a touch I yield.
TENNYSON.

If it end so meet
The bitter past, more welcome is the sweet.
ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

THE summer draws to a close: with the first chill days Madame De St. Cyr yearns swallow-like for the sunny south, whither her brother agrees to accompany her; but to their joint entreaties that Reine will be of the party, this strong-minded little person, for some unexplained reason of her own, gives a smiling yet distinctly resolute refusal.

On the eve of the Vicomte's departure he and Reine go for a farewell ramble through the forest to the "Jagdhaus;" the woods are already beautiful with warm autumnal tints; the grapes fast ripening in the hot mid-day sun, hang in heavy clusters from the vines; the harvest is long since over and the pretty valley, once a sea of waving

golden corn, is all alive with busy thrifty women plucking the ripe, red fruit.

"Mademoiselle," says De Ferrières as they mount the steep hill through a wilderness of wild rose trees bright with scarlet berries, between which purple and yellow foxgloves rear their tall heads; "my sister is distressed at your decision; is it impossible to induce you to reconsider it? Germaine does not like to leave you here alone. Madame Roland, although an excellent creature, is scarcely one of those rare individuals with whom a perpetual *téte-à-téte* would be enjoyable."

"I am contemplating enlarging her ideas by travel," says Reine demurely.

"Ah! you intend to travel?"

"Yes; can you guess where I am going?"

"I have not an idea; perhaps to Rome or Florence for the winter; I think you are wise to leave Baden but—forgive me for playing Mentor, you are too young to wander about the world alone; at Avignon you would be nearly as well off as to climate—*voyons*—will you not change your mind at the eleventh hour?"

"I am twenty-one; quite an old woman; legally responsible for all my own follies. My suite will consist of Madame Roland and Jules, two towers of strength and virtue whom scandal

dare not assail: but, have no fear, Vicomte; I am not going to migrate to any of those wicked continental countries: I am going to my own dear, damp, respectable native-land——to England: are you astonished?"

"Oh no! it is so long since I experienced that emotion I have forgotten what it is like: the last time I think was when I received a medal for good conduct at the tender age of twelve: so you are going to England; you will just be in time for the November fogs."

"It is a great secret; you will promise not to betray me."

"I swear by the immutability of woman! I am discretion itself."

"I am going on a pilgrimage: to make atonement; to do penance."

"Well, Mademoiselle! I can conceive no more sufficing penance than a pilgrimage to your capital in November; your sins must be scarlet indeed if this will not expiate them."

"Be serious, Vicomte, for five minutes," says Reine, laying a hand on his arm; "I want your advice."

"Having previously made up your mind, *n'est ce-pas?*" he answers smiling and drawing the hand through his arm: "I am quite serious, my

little friend, I assure you; tell me now as much or as little as you choose."

"I am going to England because I have been cruel, and to a certain extent unjust: I have made—some one very unhappy, and I ought to make atonement."

"Why cannot this mystic 'some one' come here, to play his part in this little drama of atonement, absolution and forgiveness?"

"He might refuse; that would be too humiliating."

"He would most certainly not refuse."

"But that would only be a sort of half atonement, without any pilgrimage."

"Child! what can you have to atone for? Loving a man much better than he will ever deserve if he live to be as old as Methuselah?" asks De Ferrières turning to look tenderly in her eager, flushed face.

"You do not know everything—the cruel things I said—the——"

"That is perhaps true," he interrupts as she hesitates; "I see your heart is set upon this little scheme of moral flagellation; but this piece of advice I will give you, Mademoiselle Reine; do not go to England unless you are prepared to forgive completely and magnani-

mously :—you understand me?—anything short of this is cruelty—not kindness; opening old wounds to no purpose: when you spoke to me of Treherne before, you asked me if he were well: I did not wish to distress you, I assured you that he was; but he is ill—ill with the worst sort of illness, sick in mind and broken in spirit; I have never seen a man so much altered in so short a time, altered in manner, in the very expression of his face; I do not suppose he is a stone lighter and he is certainly not the man to pose for the love-sick swain! I do not mean to frighten you with the idea that he is going to expire; oh! no, nothing of the sort: 'men have died and worms have eaten them, but not for love;' but our old friend Perseus looks as though he had had more than enough of his present phase of existence: and indeed, *petite amie*," adds De Ferrières with a sigh, "I can conceive that the experience of having loved you —and lost you, is not one calculated to make a man happier."

"Ah! but you must not infer that I alone am answerable——" cries Reine, in great distress, and then stops abruptly, remembering that without betraying Treherne's confidence, explanation is impossible; the idea occurs to her again that

the Vicomte is better informed than he chooses to appear, and she adds with hesitation: "Did Jasper speak much of himself to you, when you saw him in London?"

"What Treherne said to me, is not to the point I think Mademoiselle; whether he made me his father-confessor and disburthened his conscience of all the sins he has committed from his cradle upwards, or whether our conversation was confined to that one absorbing topic, the weather—does not affect the question we have to decide."

Reaching the quaint old "Jagdhaus" they stand for a few minutes on the summit of the hill, looking across the plain, into the hazy distance, where Strasburg's Minster is faintly outlined against the dim horizon.

Reine's hand still rests upon De Ferrières' arm; he lays his own upon it and says seriously: "Tell me if you will take my advice?"

"Yes; for the only reason advice is ever taken, you will say; because it suits me so well to follow it; I cannot desert Jasper; I am a very feeble-minded person I suppose, for I would rather be miserable with him than ecstatically happy with any other man."

"That is not very sound logic; but you

will not be miserable; nor will he! *Dieu!* what an idea!"

"I trust in Heaven not," says Reine fervently.

Certain qualms still disturb De Ferrières. "You have well considered what you are doing? It is no hasty decision? You are convinced it will be for your happiness?" he asks anxiously.

"I have thought of nothing else for months; of one thing I am very sure: life without Jasper can bring me no happiness."

She stands before him against the background of dark pines, rosy red, with lowered eyes, the sunlight catching at her hair, a lovely picture of sweet confusion, as she makes the avowal; she has no idea that she has stabbed him cruelly a dozen times within as many minutes; there is nothing like the so-called tender passion for blundering disregard of any but its own particular woes.

"Then you have decided wisely," says De Ferrières quietly; "may the *Bon Dieu* give you the happiness you so well deserve," he adds earnestly, as they turn their faces homewards.

Madame de St. Cyr and her brother depart the following day; the latter leaves Reine with a regretful sadness of which she little dreams; for he knows that with this journey to England,

ends the last faint hope he may have cherished. Partings at fifty may be as sad as at twenty; love in its best sense has no age, and those who imagine that youth has a monopoly of the wayward little god, have studied this phase of human nature to very little purpose; yet it must be owned that in the eyes of outsiders, a flavour of the ridiculous pervades all middle-aged affection between man and woman, excepting perhaps in the case of jog-trot, matrimonial contracts which flourish with placid evenness through long years of respectable monotony, to the admiration of all right-thinking people; it is a melancholy fact that love like many other painful maladies, increases in gravity, in proportion to the age of the patient, and this being so, surely it is palpably unjust that poets and romancers in all ages, should reserve their sympathy exclusively for the most simple phase of the disease—the passionate, evanescent, delusive love of youth, with hope before it—while the more acute form —every inch as real—to which hopeless, futureless middle age is liable, meets only with mockery and scepticism.

If De Ferrières at fifty, grey-headed, much-experienced, a little world-weary underneath his

jaunty exterior air, is ridiculous because he loves Reine so truly that to see her happy, according to her own idea of happiness, is his most earnest wish, he has at least the satisfaction of being ridiculous, in company with many worthy fellow-victims and with not a few distinguished individuals in history and fiction. Do not the best chronological authorities assure us that the incomparable Helen had reached the fat, fair and forty stage when she led the impressionable Paris captive? Did not J. J. Ampère pass his whole life sighing at the feet of Madame Récamier, more than twenty years older than himself; and when that diplomatic lady expired at the age of seventy-two, was not this languishing Strephon of fifty transported by anxious friends across the Atlantic away from the scene of that sorrow which threatened to lay him low?

De Ferrières wears his cap and bells very complacently; as he journeys along towards Avignon while his sister slumbers tranquilly in the seat opposite to him, he reflects philosophically concerning this *grande passion* which has attacked him in his mature years; smiling, as he recalls the pain it cost him a few hours since to part from that *riante* mischief-working little

face, which has invaded the peaceful solitudes of his good-natured cynicism, compelling him at the eleventh hour to remodel some of his most cherished theories and convictions on the subject of feminine idiosyncrasy.

"Did Reine speak to you of that poor young Englishman, Tristan, before you left," asks Madame de St. Cyr waking up at a later period, —"do you think she will ever pardon him this fault of which she will not even speak? Ah! it is deplorable to see two foolish children throwing away their happiness, because they are both too proud to own themselves in the wrong when there are so many people who have no choice but to be miserable, in the world! What do you think will be the end of the affair?"

"The inevitable prosaic end of all such affairs probably, Germaine; first enacted in paradise and since in so many other places—not paradise."

"Reine has told you this—it is arranged?"

"My dear sister," returns De Ferrières with unblushing hypocrisy; "you arrive at conclusions too soon; ask me to square the circle, to solve the riddle of the sphinx, but do not ask me to foretell what a woman will or will not choose to do."

Her guests are no sooner gone than Reine

electrifies Jules by desiring him to prepare at once to accompany Madame Roland and herself to England.

"To England!" repeats Jules disbelieving his own ears; for it seems indeed, to his prejudice-ridden mind, incredible, that any one in possession of their senses should, except at the dictates of urgent necessity, expose themselves to the gentle amenities of the british climate: "but Mademoiselle will reflect a little: the season is of the most dreadful; consider the fogs! the humidity, the dangers of the english 'kitchen,' to one lately so ill, so suffering."

To which persuasive remonstrances Reine replies that it is her intention to remain only a few days; that the fog must be pestiferous indeed which could compass her destruction in so short a period, that finally it is her will to start by the express the next morning: so Therèse, little Chules, Jean-Jacques and Coquin are left to console each other, and Jules, firmly persuaded that his young mistress's anxieties have at length begun to undermine her sanity, finds himself the following evening within the precincts of his beloved Paris once again.

Before dawn the next morning they are on their

way seawards, for Reine, her resolution once taken, cannot rest until it is carried out; they cross the angry, turbulent Channel where Madame Roland who makes acquaintance with the ocean for the first time, lies prostrate, begging with plaintive feebleness to be thrown overboard; at Dover they are enlivened by the grinning countenances of the assembled aborigines, who line the pier, with the amiable intention of amusing themselves with the spectacle of their fellow-creatures' sufferings; finally they take their seats limp and miserable in the express, which, after long experience of the continental steam-crawling-apparatus, appears to poor sea-sick, bewildered Madame Roland to be running away madly into the very jaws of death.

No sooner has Jules set foot on board the boat at Calais than he winds a voluminous scarf of brilliant hue, "around the massive pillar of his throat," disposing its folds carefully over mouth and nose, so that only two keen black eyes and a closely-cropped head are visible above; nor does he dispense with this classic arrangement of drapery during the whole of his stay in perfidious Albion; for, as he remarks confidentially to his co-victim Madame Roland, he is "*père de famille, varbleu!*" and it behoves him to play no pranks

with his constitution: at Victoria, these anti-pulmonary precautions awaken the suspicions of that vigilant detective Inspector Mouchard, who, conceiving the horrible idea that the innocent Jules may be some blood-thirsty, dynamitic Russian Nihilist, or other unfortunate criminal flying from the rigour of a paternal government, is good enough to display the liveliest interest in Monsieur Galette's proceedings, during the remainder of his sojourn in the metropolis.

A quiet, private hotel selected by Jules' discriminating eye receives the travellers: here, it is Madame Roland's privilege to make acquaintance with the english "cuisine." Companions in misfortune, Reine and she partake of the inevitable fried sole—Jules' face is a study as he offers the inseparable melted butter, with a respectful prayer that Mademoiselle will not tamper with her digestion—the depressingly insipid roast chicken, *sauce cataplasme*—as this scoffing Frenchman irreverently christens its accompanying condiment — and, triumph of art! a boiled apple pudding! rotund, leaden, Krupp-suggesting; which delicacy Madame Roland contemplates with mingled feelings of curiosity and alarm.

Reine's soul is filled with feverish unrest: so near Treherne, suspense becomes intolerable.

She thinks she will telegraph, or dispatch Jules with a note to his chambers: she looks out; the fog is dense, the rain is descending in torrents: humanity forbids her to condemn her faithful servitor, to run the gauntlet of catarrh and influenza: she decides to betake herself to her dismal bed-chamber and wait patiently for the morrow.

But sleep will not come to her: she lies in a state of restless excitement, listening to the ceaseless roar of the ever-busy city, watching anxiously for daybreak, or rather for the hour at which day should break but does not, by reason of the thick, yellow fog which, although it is only early October, envelops the town in an impenetrable mass. At eight o'clock she knocks at Madame Roland's door.

"But what is it—are you then ill, *chère* Mademoiselle?" asks Madame, peering into the corridor, brilliant with gas.

"No—why should I be ill? I came to call you; I am already dressed."

"Dressed! oh! but mille pardons, Mademoiselle; is it not the middle of the night?"

Laughing, Reine draws up the blind; outside it is certainly black as night, except where here and there a gas-lamp flickers fitfully through the fog.

"Scene—London; time, rosy dawn in au-

tumn," she says, amused at Madame's dismay; "if you wait for it to get light you will still be reposing at dewy eve."

"*Mon Dieu!* is it possible, is it to be believed! And people can really live in this?"

"It is not always like this; sometimes one can see quite well right across the street," Reine explains apologetically: "will you dress quickly now—because I must—that is I have business which will take us out early."

"Out! in this weather; but it is dangerous, it is a folly; you jest!"

"No indeed: I must show you the beauties of the metropolis: some of our buildings and more especially our statues do not lose by a little drapery of fog: besides, once well out in it, it is really rather refreshing."

After breakfast Reine desires Jules to call a hansom; which comes looming through the darkness looking, to Madame Roland's unpractised eye, like some hideous, phantom-vehicle, specially fashioned for the destruction of mortal man and woman.

"But, Mademoiselle, what then is that?" she asks, drawing back in alarm.

"That is the triumph of modern civilization, a hansom cab."

"But in Paris—we do not see them——"

"Because they are very difficult to drive, and the population would be decimated."

"*Vraiment!* they are then very dangerous?"

"Oh! no—not unless the horse falls down—come," says Reine consolingly.

"I am to mount into that *machine infernale!* you ask it of me?"

"You will enjoy it immensely; the only alternative is, I assure you, a machine much more *infernale.*"

With much trepidation Madame does as she is bid; off they are whirled through the labyrinth of streets, swinging round corners, shaving omnibuses, huge drays and waggons, escaping perdition, so it seems to Madame Roland, by a constant succession of miracles.

But Reine heeds neither dangers, escapes, nor any such trivial considerations; now that her project is so near fulfilment, nervous, shy misgivings beset her mind. How will Jasper receive her? Has she taken his constancy too much for granted; will his fastidious taste be outraged by this bold step of hers, or will these and all other considerations be swallowed up and forgotten in the joy of their meeting?

The cab stops, and Reine says hastily to Madame, who, with a sigh of relief and an unspoken thanksgiving, is preparing to alight, "Do not trouble to get out; I shall not be long."

"Mademoiselle, I entreat you to allow me to descend; I shall expire of fright alone in this—this—fiacre; the horse may run away."

"I don't think there is an instance on record of a London cab-horse running away; however, get out if you like and walk about; over there—somewhere—is the Thames if you could only see it—I have business with—with my lawyer," she adds, running off with a laugh, blushing guiltily.

Reine turns into a quiet little street, and trips up the stairs which lead to Treherne's bachelor domicile, vaguely conscious that this pilgrimage of hers is a somewhat *outré* proceeding, and troubled by the fear that Jasper himself may so regard it; she arrives at the outer door without meeting a soul; "Mr. Jasper Treherne," she reads; the letters dance before her eyes; she knocks—then again louder; there is no response; Mr. Treherne's establishment is apparently anything but well-organized; the door is ajar, she enters and makes boldly for the sitting-room, the position of which she remembers well.

There she knocks again; there is a second's

pause, then a familiar voice says in gruff tones, "Come in;" with a beating heart she turns the handle and enters.

She sees as in a dream the dingy room, in which the gas is burning; on the table lie the remains of a comfortless, bachelor breakfast; for Treherne, in the matter of material comfort, is not expert in the art of taking care of number one; before the fire, with its back to the door, is a large, old-fashioned arm-chair; over the top Reine espies a dark, compact head, comfortably reposing; blue smoke wreathes upwards; two slippered feet, *horribile dictu*, rest upon the mantel-piece; the *Times* is in course of perusal; decidedly the first view of Mr. Treherne, as presented to the eyes of his long-absent lady-love, is *not* suggestive of a broken-heart or even of acute mental depression; but then, how seldom is outward appearance a correct index to the inner man; how still more seldom to the inner woman!

"Well! brought the answer?" asks Treherne's voice sharply; while the classic beauty of his pose remains unchanged.

"Jasper!"

Why should the mere utterance of a man's christian name cause him to jump up as if

he had received a violent electric shock, to send his priceless, cherished meerschaum under the grate, and the *Times*, that bulwark of England's greatness, flying ignominiously into the corner of the room?

Reine stands just inside the door pale as a ghost, in which light indeed she appears almost, to Treherne; only, for some unexplained reason, white is *de rigueur* for all ghostly draperies, and this one wears black; and surely no spectral milliner ever confectioned that irresistible hat with its long, pendant plume!

"Reine! is it possible?" Treherne cries, advancing with eager, outstretched arms, which, as he suddenly remembers the great abyss which by her own decree divided them when last they parted, drop at his side, as he halts abruptly midway.

"Why are you here?" he asks, in a voice rendered hard and cold by the struggle to retain his self-command.

"I—I—wanted to see you," she stammers, unable to utter a word of all the eloquent speeches she has been long weeks rehearsing.

"To see me! if there is anything that I can do for you I shall be, as you know, most happy; but could you not have written; it would have been kinder—to me at any rate."

She comes a little nearer and leans upon a chair for support; this rebuff so wounds her that she dares not answer him, because of an overpowering inclination to cry, of which in presence of his relentless stoicism, she feels most needlessly ashamed.

"Would it have been kinder?" she says presently very lamely, and all her heroic efforts notwithstanding, the last word dies in a sob.

"It is kinder to kill a man right off than to flay him alive by inches, is it not?"

The unnecessary cruelty of this illustration puts the small remnant of Reine's attempted heroism to flight; with one swift reproachful glance into Treherne's face she falls to sobbing bitterly.

Is it for this she has suffered, overcome, forgiven, the poor child wonders! how insignificant her struggles and victories appear—how dwarfed in the presence of this iron nature which seems to spurn forgiveness.

"Do not distress yourself; I am sorry if I have pained you:" he says with studied politeness, in the same cold, every-day voice; "will you not sit down?"

He offers her the arm-chair he has vacated and she sinks gratefully into its hospitable arms, for indeed she can scarcely stand.

Treherne allows her to cry on a little time in silence, and when she grows quieter, he resumes in tones a shade more genial: "I am sorry to see you so distressed: tell me, Reine, what it is I can do for you."

Drying her eyes she steals furtive glances from behind her handkerchief at his stern impassive face: she sees now, that De Ferrières was right; that these months of suffering, of unrest, have indeed left their mark behind; her heart fills with pity and a tender yearning which sets her longing to throw her arms round this bronze statue's neck to comfort him; but she cannot trust her voice to answer his question, for a fresh supply of tears is imminent.

"Have you come perhaps to see me on business in my capacity of guardian?"

"Yes," lachrymosely still.

"About money matters?"

"No."

He reflects a moment. "About—about your marriage perhaps?"

"Yes," says Reine softly, while her cheeks bloom like two red roses in that dismal room.

Treherne's lips tighten under his moustache, but he makes no other sign that he is stung.

"Ah! and you are engaged to marry, whom?"

No answer.

"Von Waldeck?"

"No."

"Have you not seen as much of him as before?"

"Oh yes—even more," she answers, hiding a smile behind her handkerchief, for in Treherne's presence, under the influence of his kinder manner, the old spirit of mischief is slowly reviving.

"Has he not asked you to marry him?"

"Oh! yes."

"You refused him?"

"Naturally."

"Why, naturally? he is——"

"All that is most desirable—he would never behave cruelly to any woman however much he might think himself aggrieved."

"Then why in the name of everything that is consistent did you refuse to make this admirable Crichton happy?"

"Because I have no vocation for self-sacrifice," she replies with a rapid glance from under dark, wet lashes, which is nearly fatal to his cold assumption of equanimity.

"It is not von Waldeck?"

"I have told you it is not."

"De Ferrières then?"

Reine shakes her head. "He has not done me

the honour to propose to me: or perhaps I might not have refused him," she adds maliciously.

"It must then be some one whose acquaintance you have made quite lately?"

"No."

Treherne is struggling against a mad temptation to take her in his arms and tell her no other man on earth shall ever call her his; but remembering all the wretched past and that she herself has almost confessed her love for another, by a strong effort he refrains: wisely turning his eyes away from the troubled, tantalizing little face, for the sight of which he has longed for so many weary months, he says with a shade of impatience:

"Be reasonable: what is the use of coming to me for advice and refusing me the information which can alone enable me to give it?"

"It is not settled; all is still uncertain—preliminaries even are not yet arranged; there are many difficulties," she stammers with down cast eyes.

"Has—the man—money?"

"Sufficient."

"He is in a good position—a thorough gentleman of course?"

"Of course."

"Of good family?"

"The Howards are mushrooms in comparison," returns Reine gravely; "his ancestors were little kings in Cornwall two centuries before the Conquest!"

"In Cornwall! a countryman of mine?"

"That distinction is also his."

"What sort of a fellow is he?"

"Not—ill-looking personally—rather the reverse; in character he is rather cross-grained and uncertain?"

"Cross-grained! to you?"

"Certainly—does that seem quite incredible to *you?*" she asks, looking with large eyes, full of meaning, straight into his.

"It does—under certain conditions," he answers drily.

"In what then does the attraction consist—is he clever?"

"A walking encyclopædia—a second Dr. Whewell."

"Old or young?"

"Hum—well—middle-aged."

"Some dried-up old german book-worm, I suppose."

"Allow me to remind you that your native county is not colonized by germans, dried-up, old, or otherwise, with blood bluer than the Howards';

and please not to speak disrespectfully of the object of my affections."

"Why are you so perverse, Reine—why cannot you tell me all about the fellow without making me drag it all out of you by syllables, as if you were a shuffling witness?"

"It is good for you to rub up your talent for cross-examination."

"At least tell me if you are sure he cares for you sufficiently to make you happy?"

"Ah! that is the difficulty; the point I can never decide; but the world is so dreary, so lonely with nobody to care for one—sometimes I feel so forlorn without—*père*."

Treherne bites his lip and walks away to the window; when he can command his voice sufficiently he returns, and looking down at her says with grave earnestness:

"Do you think this state of things will be remedied or in any sense ameliorated if you marry a man concerning whose love you are doubtful, and for whom you do not profess, so far as I can judge, to care very much yourself?"

"I do care; you are mistaken: it is about him that I am doubtful: I—I love him with all my heart;" she answers so low that he barely

catches the words; but by some instinct he divines their import as he watches cheeks, throat and little pink ears all dye themselves crimson alike.

He swallows this bitter pill as best he may; when he speaks again, his voice is no longer cold and measured, but broken and full of pain.

"Reine, my little sister," he says most sadly, "you are your own mistress now; even the shadow of authority I once possessed as your guardian is at an end. Child! can you still believe in me sufficiently to give me credit for disinterestedness in any advice I give you?"

"Why should I not believe it?"

"Because, God help me! it is hard to be disinterested when one has loved a woman with all one's soul and strength and lost her; and she talks of loving and marrying—another man! Child! child! be warned in time: a one-sided contract is a dangerous thing in a partnership which only death can dissolve. Tell me, why do you imagine this fellow does not love you?"

"Because he says cruel things to me sometimes; he has made me cry more often than any other man," says Reine, behind the friendly handkerchief.

"You accuse me of cruelty too, Reine, some-

times, and yet that does not prevent——at least *did* not prevent——"

"He is quite as disagreeable as you are—every bit as ill-tempered," she interrupts hastily.

"If he indulges in these amenities now—what on earth do you expect of him, as a husband?"

"It is before that eventuality that I confess my valiant spirit quails."

"If it quails now at the mere prospect, when you are still free, what will it do at the reality, through years of ill-mated captivity?"

"It makes one shudder to think of it," cries Reine hypocritically, hiding her face in her hands, so that Treherne may not see the smile she cannot repress.

"Then how can you be so infatuated—so unwise—so untrue to your own convictions? Have I not heard you inveigh a thousand times since that miserable affair against the wickedness, the madness of loveless marriages?"

"That would have been a marriage in which there was no real affection on either side; this case is different."

"Then if this meagre substitute for a true marriage — this one-sided take-all-and-give-nothing system could content you, why did you

not accept von Waldeck and so escape from your desolate condition? He at least loved you, I am very sure, and he is too thorough a gentleman to behave roughly to any woman—even his wife—whereas, this other fellow seems, by your account, with all his blue blood, to be not far removed from a brute."

"He is not that by any means; when he has all his own way he can be the kindest, the pleasantest, the——"

"Spare me the catalogue of his perfections, please," breaks in Treherne savagely.

"Just now you complained that I did not enter sufficiently into detail," she returns with an aggrieved air.

"Well!" he says with a faint smile, recovering, "I will agree to take this fortunate individual's transcendent superiority for granted; let us stick to the practical side of the question: tell me why, with this new-fangled opinion of yours, you did not marry von Waldeck."

"That would have been marrying a man *I* did not care for," says Reine wisely, laying down the law; "this is quite different—the case reversed in fact."

"It is all one and the same, foolish child!" cries Treherne impatiently; "an unfair, unequal

bargain, which gives to one the opportunity for inflicting untold misery, which the other, rudely disillusioned, may bear as he or she best can. How I wish I could make you see life as I know it to be, just for one short half-hour, so that I might convince you that this sacrifice of yourself to an idea is worse than madness! How do you know after all that it is really love you feel for this man, and not a mere passing fancy, born of *ennui?*"

"Because a passing fancy does not, I imagine, make one miserable when one is separated from its object—does not render one's life, under those conditions, an empty, maimed, insipid thing—in no sense 'worth living.'"

"All this—or something very like it—you said not many months ago *apropos* of—another individual," says Treherne, while the blood rushes all over his dark face; "how can you tell that it is truer now than it was then?"

To this most pertinent question there comes no reply.

"You are quite certain you are not mistaken?" he asks again anxiously, considerably staggered at this evidence of inconstancy in the woman in whom he has so implicitly believed.

"Quite sure; I love him with my whole heart

and soul; to part from him would be unspeakable unhappiness; I could not bear it," Reine answers, looking wistfully into his face, with quivering lips and earnest eyes, before which his last faint hope ebbs slowly away.

"Then for God's sake!" he answers, drawing a deep sigh, "tell me the fellow's name—let me find out, if I can, whether he is sane or not—and help you to be—happy!"

"I can answer for his sanity—and his name is——;" two fair arms twine themselves round Treherne's neck; a little face fresh as a blush rose is pressed against his cheek; two soft, red lips flutter light as a butterfly near his astonished ear, murmuring deliciously—"Jasper Treherne."

The revulsion of feeling is too great and sudden: he cannot believe what he hears! He unwinds the tender arms which cling and will not suffer themselves to be unwound; but he insists, and putting her gently away from him, says sternly:

"You are forgetting all that has happened; how you sent me away from you—and perhaps justly; it is sufficient happiness for me to know you have forgiven me—that you still have some regard left for me—more than this I have no

right to ask; go, Reine, now at once, while I am strong—it is my turn now—go."

"I shall *not* go," she cries, throwing herself with a glad little cry into his willing arms again; "I have been wretched long enough; I have forgotten nothing! You have grown very rude and inhospitable; Jasper, Jasper, say I may stay, or I shall infallibly expire of humiliation, although it *is* Leap Year."

She hides her blushing, conscious face away upon his shoulder; his eyes, which she cannot see, are wet with tears; stooping, he rests his lips among the soft ripples of her hair, for the long-plumed hat has considerately rolled under the table.

"Well!" she murmurs, not raising her head, "granite, marble, iron—platinum is the hardest metal, I believe; are you cogitating how you may most gracefully word a refusal?"

"Does a drowning man refuse a rope?—but oh! my darling, it is a sacrifice I have no right to accept."

"The reverse is a penance you have no right to impose."

"This individual you have been frightening me with is a bogey then: he has no existence?"

"Indeed he has: a most palpable existence;

six feet or so of very tangible flesh and bone, the habitation of a stern, relentless spirit. Wicked boy! you knew quite well you were the original of the scarecrow you pretended to be so frightened at, only you were determined not to lend me a helping hand out of the dilemma into which I had voluntarily waded."

"On my honour, I had not an idea: I despaired of ever seeing you again; besides, am I a walking encyclopædia—a second Dr. Whewell? The immense antiquity of my pedigree is also a revelation to me."

"All that was fiction founded on fact, and an example of my fine irony."

"Reine—child—it seems too good to be true—shall you never repent?" asks Treherne, possessing himself of her two hands and looking with anxious inquiry into her face.

"Frequently, no doubt."

"I am so cross-grained, so uncertain, so ill-tempered."

"Those are melancholy facts."

"I never used to be; I never shall be again, sweet."

"I am not infatuated enough to believe that my influence will work a complete revolution in your very faulty character, sir; I shall recall

that rash promise to your memory some day, when the mutton is under-done, your wristbands not ironed to the proper pitch of glaziness, or when you lose your temper about any one of those fearful calamities which are apt to ruffle the serenity of noble man."

"You really mean you will marry me?" asks Treherne, like a man in a dream, feeling still utterly incredulous.

"What a question, when I have proposed to you three distinct times within the last hour."

"You love me then, after all?"

"After all, through all, you and no other; to-day, to-morrow, and for ever," she says, with sudden sweet solemnity.

"Am I quite forgiven?"

"My forgiveness is of little account," she answers with grave simplicity; "but I have prayed God to forgive you, and I think He has, or He would not have let me come back to you."

There ensues a period during which these two say many things to each other, whose hidden wisdom it is not given to the uninitiated to appreciate; presently Treherne suddenly relapsing into the ordinary phraseology of common-sense, inquires of Reine how long she has been in England.

"I only arrived last night; do you think

I would have allowed a day to pass without unearthing you?"

"You did not come alone, I hope?"

"With Jules and—— Oh! Jasper, that unfortunate Madame Roland is out there all this time in the fog; how long have I been here?"

"Ten minutes perhaps."

"Sixty at least; do you think she is dead—suffocated perhaps," cries Reine, struggling for freedom, hastily replacing her hat. "I must go; think of that poor, patient creature's sufferings; I told her I was going to see my lawyer—on business; may I be forgiven!"

"One minute, Reine," says Treherne, detaining her; "when do you return?"

"To-night—no, to-morrow."

"I shall go with you."

"Think of the claims of your profession."

"My profession be—blessed; do you think you will escape so easily now I have once found you?" he answers, catching her, great hat and all, to his heart again.

"Imagine that regiment of clients I saw waiting in your ante-room, all being sent empty away!"

"I shall start to-morrow for Baden, and shall remain there so long as it pleases me."

"*Zu Befehl!*" she answers, laughing and

clicking her heels together, while she poses two fingers daintily against her eyebrow in imitation of the German salute. "Oh! Jasper, is it not good to be together again?"

Of her own will she lifts her lovely face to his and drops a light kiss on his cheek, and turning, runs lightly down the stairs, closely followed by her legal adviser.

Madame Roland still lives, but tired of wandering down by the river-side, has surmounted her fears and seated herself in the friendly hansom; she has not found the time long, for it has been her privilege to witness many sights calculated to awaken wonder, and induce reflection in the untravelled gallic mind; viz., a bare-legged Highlander, with what Carlyle might term very "articulate" bagpipes; a guardsman with cap the size of a patty-pan; several samples of the picturesque British "Peeler;" innumerable specimens of the far-famed London "growler;" endless beggars, crippled or otherwise, of every age, sort, size, and description—very astonishing to a native of a land where mendicity is strictly *défendue;* a string of grimy, shuffling sandwich-men, each flattened between two huge letters which spell collectively the name of the last burlesque; and finally, a tract distributor,

who kindly presents Madame Roland with a "leaflet," bearing the significant title, "Smashed to Pieces!!" which fortunately for the repose of her spirit, during the homeward drive, she is quite unable to decipher.

Treherne greets Madame with a few words of his best french, while Reine delivers herself volubly of many laughing apologies.

"Ah! but the time has passed quite pleasantly, I assure you; I have seen many curious things, *du reste*," adds this pattern watch-dog with a pleasant smile; "I know that legal business cannot be transacted in an instant."

And so it comes to pass very shortly that Reine, Treherne, and Madame Roland, with Jules —elated and jubilant at the aspect of things in general, in attendance—journey back to Baden; and later in the year, when winter has wrapped the pine forests in her cold, white shroud, mild little Mr. Braye ties the fatal knot in the noose which these two infatuated young people have elected to hang about their necks. Theirs is a very quiet wedding, to which few guests are bidden; but Madame de St. Cyr travels back to Baden to see Treherne made happy; De Ferrières is best man, and if the keeping of the tenth commandment be a hard matter to him, his struggles,

disappointments and regrets are hidden away scrupulously in his own breast, and from the bottom of his heart he rejoices at Reine's happiness.

On this auspicious day Jules is full of proud importance and the emotional Therèse a confused medley of smiles, tears, bobs, white ribbons and saintly invocations; little Jules succumbs temporarily to an acute attack of indigestion, induced by the consumption of a large portion of real english wedding-cake, but under his father's judicious treatment revives sufficiently to witness "Mademoiselle's" departure and to wish her tearfully, in his pretty, lisping french: "*Bon voyage.*"

The Reverend Hinton Challoner graces the ceremony with his presence; he being desirous, so he informs Reine, not very lucidly, that for the honour of the family, her nearest relative should not be absent on the occasion of her wedding; in reply to her letter informing her cousin of her approaching marriage, he takes the opportunity of offering a few words of counsel, which occupy sixteen closely-written pages, concerning the trials and duties of the state of life upon which she is about to enter, and begs her acceptance of a copy of the immortal Bunyan's wearisome Pilgrim's dismal experiences, as a token of friendship and good-will on the part of himself and his Claudia.

Reine's face is the saddest in the group which assembles in the little English church, for her thoughts are with her dead father, whose place in her heart, not even Treherne will ever usurp; were Jean-Jaques not the embodiment of discretion, he could tell how often, even in these comparatively happy days, he has been aroused from peaceful slumber in the dead of the night, by the sound of sobs and sighs—how many bitter tears have been shed upon his friendly, glossy coat when none, but he, were near.

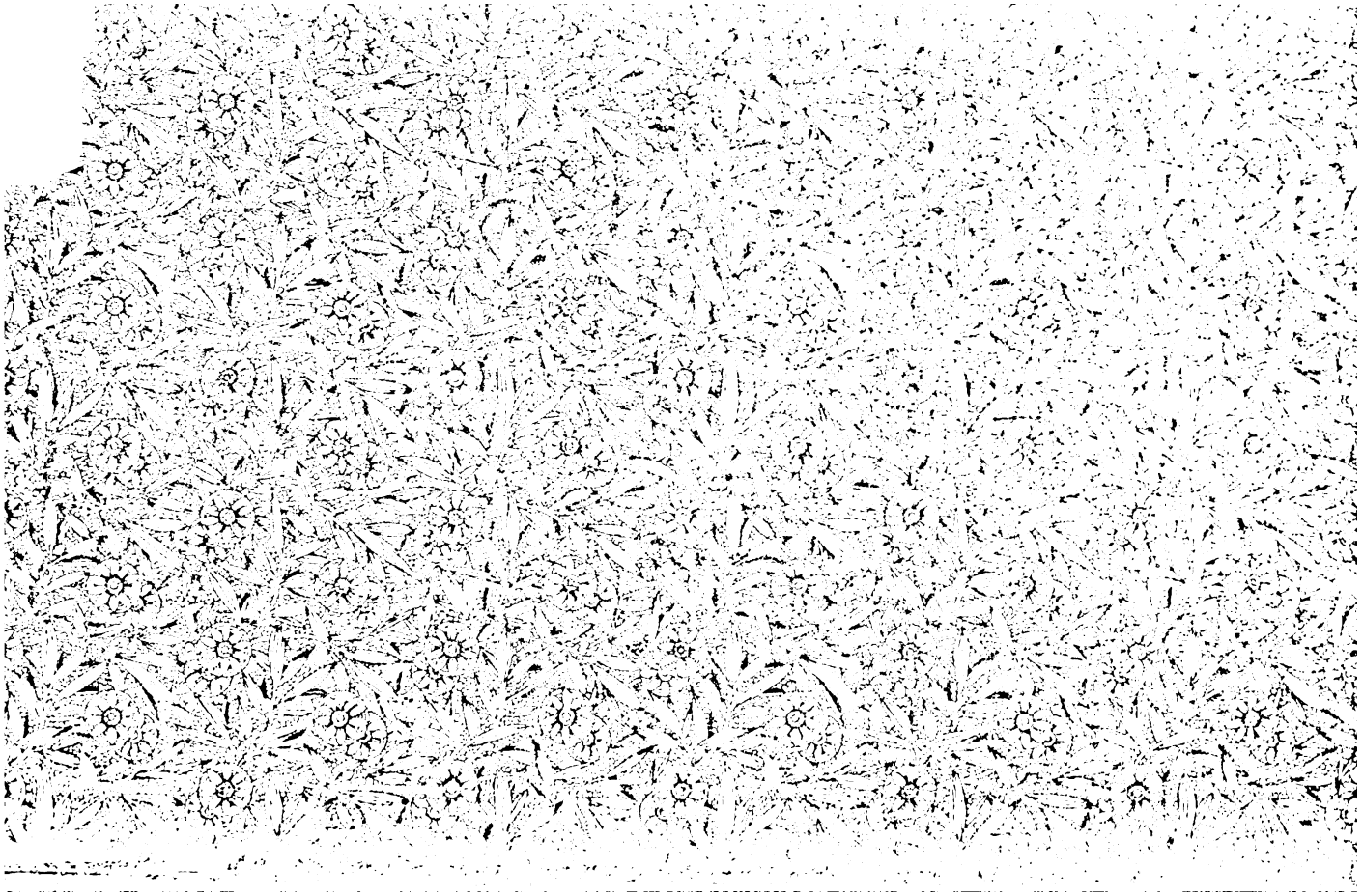
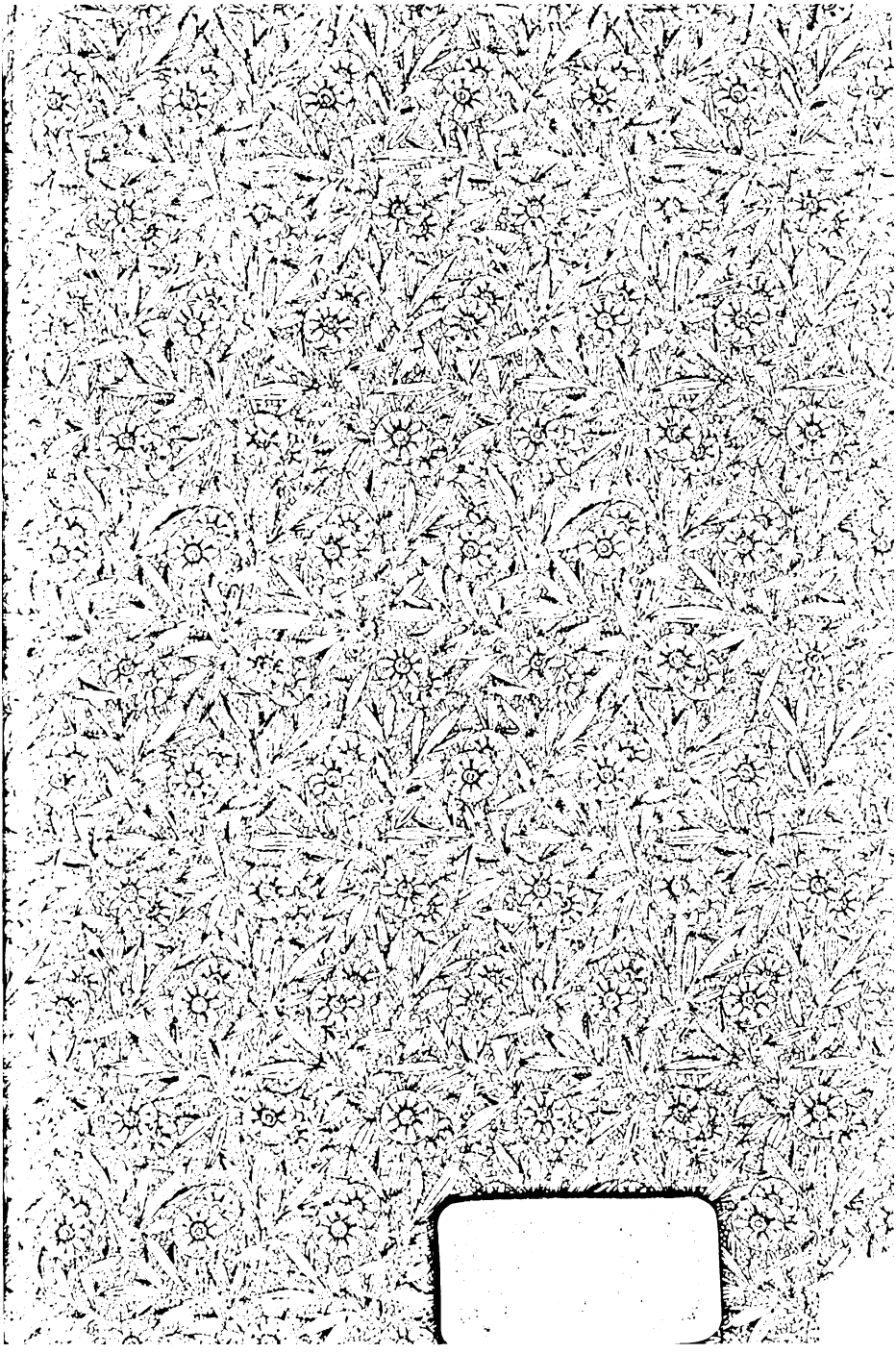
Treherne carries off his bride to Italy, away from frost and snow and biting northern winds: they wander about pleasantly, revisiting their old haunts together, until half the year has passed quickly away: then Reine, being a wise clear-headed little personage, knowing that love alone never can suffice to fill a man's life wholly, advises a return to England, where, she chooses to prophesy, Treherne is eventually destined to shine resplendent, as a notable legal luminary.

To his objections, that she dislikes the climate of his native land, that sun and blue skies are necessities to her, that she will be terribly lonely during his long unavoidable absences, that his, is an up-hill profession, in which the game rarely is worth the candle, this self-willed young Minerva

positively refuses to listen; a man without occupation is, she declares, a calamity to himself and every one else; as to her dislike to an english life, it is true there are more cheerful climates in the world; but can he imagine for one moment that she would allow him to sacrifice his career and future greatness!—to her caprice? Where he is, there is her home; "the desert were a paradise if thou wert there," she assures this fortunate young man with appropiate gestures, who, it is to be feared, is on the high-road to being ingloriously henpecked, seeing that he packs his portmanteau obediently forthwith.

Events prove that Reine has decided wisely. A certain degree of success falls to the share of Treherne; it is even possible that before Time has played many of his spiteful tricks upon him—knocked out his strong, white teeth, snowballed his dark thick curls, and scrawled ugly hieroglyphics underneath his fine eyes—Reine's fond prediction may be partially fulfilled; for it happened that not long after his return to England, Mr. Treherne was called upon, in consequence of the sudden indisposition of his senior, to take the lead as counsel for the defence in a somewhat notorious case, in which a man of hitherto unblemished character was indicted for murder,

committed without premeditation and under circumstances of extreme provocation. On this occasion Treherne distinguished himself, not only by the skilful manner in which he annihilated a couple of truculent, prevaricating witnesses for the prosecution, but by an able, concise, and admirably delivered speech, which besides making a deep impression upon the jury and securing an acquittal for the unfortunate prisoner upon the capital charge, met with the marked approval of several more experienced brethren, and even elicited a gracious recognition from the learned judge himself: since this remarkable achievement, Reine hears the rustling of the coveted silk gown prospectively; and sees in imagination the magical "Q.C." figuring after her husband's name.

Treherne and Reine have purchased a pretty cottage with a garden full of fragrant, old-fashioned flowers, and spreading, shady trees sloping down to the river; from this sylvan retreat Treherne makes daily journeys to the Temple; and here he and Reine, Jean-Jacques, Coquin, Therèse, Jules father and son, are all actively, passively, or supremely happy—each after his or her own fashion.

THE END.